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LIVING EPISTLES;

OR,

CHRIST'S WITNESSES IN THE WORLD.

ALSO AN ESSAY ON

CHRISTIANITY AND SKEPTICISM.

BY THE

REV. E. HARTLEY DEWART.

WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY THE

REV. WILLIAM ORMISTON, D.D.



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THE AUTHOR'S PREFACE.

A FEW words from an author to his readers may dispel some unfavorable prejudice, or enable them more clearly to understand his work, and more fully to sympathize with its aim and purpose. To some, indeed, it may seem like presumption, for any one "unknown to fame," to add another book to the vast number already in existence. It is generally admitted, however, that the men of every age must, to a great extent, produce the literature, in every department of study, that shall inspire and direct the thought and action of their own times. However excellent, or even superior, the books of past ages may be, they are not conceived from the standpoint of the living present, in which we are to play our part; and they cannot, therefore, possess complete adaptation to our intellectual and religious necessities. Just as individuals, at different periods of their natural life, have different wants and duties, which may demand widely different kinds of counsel and help, so the world, at different

periods of its history, may require to be addressed with a wise recognition of the changes that have taken place in the moods and habits of thought which prevail among men. Believing that the Christian Church has not so fully achieved the object of her great mission in the world, as the Divine promises would lead us to expect, the main purpose of this little book is to try to fairly answer the question: "Why has not the influence of the Christian religion in the world been more mighty and successful than it actually has been?" In finding the answer to this question, chiefly in the defective testimony for the truth of the common Christian life, I do not claim that this is the full and exhaustive answer; but simply that one most serious cause of failure is pointed out, the removal of which by the attainment of a larger measure of Divine life, would greatly increase the power and progress of Christ's Kingdom in the world.

The concluding essay on Current Infidelity is, from its brevity, necessarily condensed and incomplete. Yet, I trust it will present to those who may not have access to more elaborate works, on the great modern conflict between Christianity and the atheistic philosophy of the times, a correct view of the chief causes of the prevailing unbelief, and of the subtle and plausible assumptions by which some modern scientists are undermining the Christian faith, and of the weighty objections to which these anti-Christian theories lie fairly open. In these times of

PREFACE.

v

mental unrest, when the plausible speculations of unbelief, and "science falsely so called," are largely tainting the periodical literature of the world, a mere blind faith, however sincere, is not enough. Christians must keep abreast with the intelligence of the times, and be able to point out the fallacies and false assumptions of the enemies of Christian truth, as well as to give a good reason for the faith that animates and sustains them.

I may also venture to say that, as my sole purpose in writing this work has been to stir up those who name the name of Christ, to witness a good confession for Him in the world, I have purposely avoided the discussion of all questions of polemical theology; and have based my appeals on the great scriptural truths, held in common by all evangelical Protestants. If the statements and admonitions of this book should, by God's blessing, be the means of arousing some Christian professors, who are sleeping on "the enchanted ground" of conformity to the world, to seek grace to witness and work more consistently for Christ, the highest ambition of its author will be satisfied.

E. H. D.

TORONTO, May 15th, 1878.



INTRODUCTION.

IN reading the sacred Scriptures, one is profoundly impressed with the exalted type of spiritual excellence therein delineated, and presented as attainable by every believer. Nor can one fail to perceive the paramount importance assigned to the full manifestation in the world of a complete Christian character, as it relates to the welfare of its possessor, the good of others, the glory of God, and the extension of the Redeemer's kingdom. In the mission of Christ Himself, His holy, sinless, sympathetic, self-sacrificing life occupies a prominent place. It is at once a grand revelation of the character of God, in His relations to man, and a most affecting exhibition of the privileges and duties of man in his relations to God. It clearly unfolds what He is to us and what we may become to Him. The life of Jesus is the great lesson, as His example is the perfect pattern, for our lives. So pure and lofty is the ideal of human life enjoined by the precepts and exemplified by the conduct of Jesus, and further inculcated and enforced by the teachings of His inspired Apostles, that many regard it as overdrawn and impracticable, or, at

best, a model only to be aimed at now, without the hope of actual realization, until some future and more favored period of human history. But the Christian life, uniformly enjoined and commended in the Word of God, is for all men and for all time. The two great commandments and the golden rule are unaffected by clime or century. The teachings of the Master and His Apostles are of universal and permanent authority. The character and course of life enjoined upon the first followers of our Lord, and in many instances so heroically exhibited by them, in most difficult and trying circumstances, are required and expected of "all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord." The same spirit of unreserved consecration, zealous devotion, and self-denying sacrifice which distinguished them in the service of Christ, should characterize all His servants in every generation. His people to-day are under not only equal, but greatly increased obligations to serve or suffer for His sake. Greater privileges and larger opportunities are ours, and these call for nobler lives and grander service.

The purpose of God in reconciling men to Himself by the gospel of His grace, is to restore them to His favor and fellowship—to raise them into a new, divine life—in order that they may be "to the praise of His glory," by becoming co-workers with Him, as the agents of His will, the ministers of His grace, to their fellow-men. Genuine conversion to Christ is a divine commission to serve Him.

When our Lord left the world and ascended to His mediatorial throne in heaven, He solemnly imposed upon

His followers the duty of carrying on His work upon earth. He authoritatively commissioned them to preach the Gospel to every creature, assuring them of His own abiding presence. He said, "As my Father hath sent Me, even so send I you." All Christians are therefore Christ's messengers and representatives in the world. They have, like Him, a special mission. They are to exhibit His character and make known His power to save. Not only is the Church collectively to hold, maintain, and proclaim the truth, but each Christian is individually to embody and exemplify it. Truth is ever most potent when presented in a life transfigured and ennobled by it. The most effective, prevailing, and permanent power for good is a holy, consistent life. The steady light of example, and the constant pressure of personal influence, are moral forces which are as irresistible as they are inestimable, and upon them largely depend the power and propagation of the gospel among men. "There is nothing that will let the light into the soul like personal influence; nothing that will lift one up out of the darkness, and lead him into the divine and quickening light, and baptize him into the spirit of faith, hope, love, and charity, like the magnetic power of a great example." What the Church specially needs to-day, to enable her to accomplish her high mission in bringing the Gospel of salvation to the world and the world to Christ, is a Christian life more in accordance with the pattern prescribed in the Word, and less conformed to the principles and practices approved by the world;—a life distinctively and unmistakably Christlike in its spirit and tenor.

He who, in sublime majesty, said of Himself, "I am the Light of the world," says also earnestly to all His true disciples, "Ye are the light of the world." And the Apostle of the Gentiles, in the spirit of his Master, addressing his brethren in Christ, and all who have obtained like precious faith, says, "Among whom ye shine as lights in the world, holding forth the word of life." Christ himself is the great central, originating, exhaustless source of light, which lighteth every man and all holy beings. The highest and holiest hierarchies of heaven, the mightiest and most glorious of created spirits, bask in His radiance, and reflect His brightness. So also the humblest believer on earth receives and reflects the light divine. It is the nature of light to make itself manifest—to shine and shed its radiance on all around. So by virtue of possessing the light—the truth as it is in Jesus—each Christian shines, holding forth the word of life to others. Our common nature, mutual dependence, and reciprocal sympathies, give to every man an influence unconscious, unceasing, and effective, and make every living Christian a power for good. In all our social intercourse, we get and give, and, in spiritual things especially, we get in giving. "No man liveth to himself."

The light-giving life of the Christian includes both being and doing, character and conduct, example and effort. While emitting the radiance of a holy life, he must also hold forth the word of life. But it is pre-eminently the common privilege of all the saved to shine. Many may not be able to speak eloquently, or to write forcibly, or to work vigorously, or to give liberally; but

all can live holily, suffer patiently, or endure cheerfully, or pray fervently, and thus shine as lights in the world, to win the sinner from the error of his way. If we may not glow like the sun in splendor, or shine like the moon in brightness, we may sparkle as a star in beauty. If we may not blaze like a candelabrum in a palace, we may stand as a candlestick in some lowly home. If we send not the radiance of a lighthouse, far out over the deep, to warn and guide a multitude of storm-tossed mariners, we may be a light in the window to welcome some solitary benighted wanderer. As one planet differeth from another in position, magnitude, orbit, or glory, yet all reflect the light of the central sun, so each saved soul, in his own place and way, may radiate the light of truth, and guide a sinner to Christ. Each has his own place and work which no other can fill or perform. All live to the Lord, and for Him.

As books and texts are often embellished by illuminated letters and pictorial illustrations, so Christians, by gracious dispositions, sweetened tempers, noble deeds, kind words, wise counsels, and tender sympathies, may illumine and render attractive and persuasive the Gospel of the grace of God, and bring the light of life to the darkened and the dying.

It has pleased God, in the exercise of infinite wisdom, to give to us the revelation of His will, and a knowledge of the redemption which is in Christ Jesus, largely in the form of interesting narratives of events in the lives and labors of His chosen servants. The teachings of Christ consist to a great extent in the report of His conversations and dealings with individuals. Much of

the most successful and permanent work of the Church in every age has been achieved by zealous, well-directed personal effort, and the resistless charm of spiritual excellence. The names of many of the devoted servants of God are as ointment poured forth, though dead, they still speak.

Abel's offering, Enoch's walk with God, and Noah's long protest against unrighteousness, tinge with an edge of silver the lurid clouds which rest upon the antediluvian age. Abraham, nobly distinguished as "the friend of God," by his implicit faith in the promises of God, and his unquestioning obedience to His command, irradiates the dawn of the patriarchal day with light, which shines with undiminished lustre still. Joseph, by his peerless piety, purity, and prudence, made the God of Israel known in the land of Egypt, and prepared a home for the early ancient Church. Moses, the man of God, by the power of his faith, the grandeur of his character, and the radiance of his spiritual life, renders the land of the Pharoahs and the wilderness alike memorable and instructive for all the ages. Elijah, in his fiery zeal, dauntless heroism, and self-sacrificing devotion, flashed like a meteor athwart the darkness of Israel's spiritual eclipse, brought the people back to the worship of the true God, and constituted Mount Carmel a perpetual testimony to His presence and power. Daniel, the man greatly beloved, by his consistent life, his heavenly wisdom, and unhesitating fidelity, brightened the cloudy period of the long exile, and caused the living God to be acknowledged in a land of idols. Paul, by the splendour of his gifts, the height of his spiritual attainments, and

the extent of his labors, poured a flood of light on many lands—a light in which we now rejoice.

During the early ages of the Christian Church, in the dark centuries which followed, in the period of the Reformation, and in many times of refreshing until the present day, many have been raised up, whose names illustrate the power of a life of faith and holy consecration. Often in the dark days of spiritual declension and apostasy, have a faithful few kept bright and beaming the lamp of life. The Waldenses in the valleys of Piedmont, the Huguenots on the plains of France, the Covenanters on the moors of Scotland, and the Hollanders in the fens of the Netherlands, all bravely lived and nobly died for the cause and Kingdom of the Redeemer, and we enjoy the inheritance they won and bequeathed. All valiant souls are victors.

In the present position of the Church, and aspect of the world, there is much which is hopeful and inspiring, and which summons us to purpose and achieve great things for Him whose right it is to reign. All lands are now open and easy of access; favorable posts in most of them are already occupied; the Word of God is freely circulated in many tongues; the professed followers of Christ are numerous, specially in the most powerful and aggressive nations of the world; religious institutions and agencies are well organized; facilities are furnished for all disposed to aid in the work; the means at the disposal of the Church are ample; the field is the world, and it is white; the Redeemer is on the throne, and His Spirit is sent; this is the day of His power—only the united, earnest, loyal co-operation of His people is needed

to bring in the glad day when the kingdoms of the world shall become the Kingdom of our Lord.

What has already been exemplified by a few heroic servants of God, and achieved among all races and ranks of men, shews that if all Christians rose to the height of their privilege and the demands of the time, the evangelization of the world would be speedily accomplished. But ere the Church is fitted to wield the agencies providentially within her reach, her moral power must be increased, the tone of piety raised, the standard of Christian living and liberality elevated, and love for her risen Head deepened. Each Christian must realize with more distinctness, that while he is in the world, he is not of it, but above it, that all his worldly relations, and interests must be subordinated to the one object of advancing the Kingdom of Christ, and that amid all the activities and enterprises of an exceedingly active, restless, and progressive age, he must be loyal to his King and Master, by giving to Him the testimony of a high, holy life; and by consecrating to His service his renewed powers and quickened energies in every sphere of Christian efforts and influence.

The need and nature of such a higher Christian life of practical godliness, its helps and hindrances, its power and prospects, are fully presented, finely illustrated, and eloquently enforced in this exceedingly seasonable volume. The manner in which the subject is presented is peculiarly catholic, and is well fitted to impart a healthy and helpful stimulus to all who are seeking to attain higher joys and more abundant fruitfulness in their

INTRODUCTION.

xv

Christian career, and who are desirous of becoming more distinctly legible as "Epistles of Christ." "For Zion's sake will I not hold my peace, and for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest, until the righteousness thereof go forth as brightness, and the salvation thereof as a lamp that burneth." "Awake, awake; put on thy strength, O Zion; put on thy beautiful garments, O Jerusalem, the holy city." "Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee."

W. ORMISTON.

NEW YORK, May 1st, 1878.



CONTENTS.

	PAGE
INTRODUCTION, BY REV. W. ORMISTON, D.D . . .	7
CHAPTER I.	
PRESENT RELIGIOUS STATE OF THE WORLD . . .	18
CHAPTER II.	
THE INFLUENCE OF A GODLY LIFE	37
CHAPTER III.	
CONFORMITY TO THE WORLD	67
CHAPTER IV.	
INCONSISTENCY BETWEEN THE LIFE AND THE CREED . .	111
CHAPTER V.	
FAULTS OF SPIRIT AND TEMPER	149
CHAPTER VI.	
SCRIPTURAL HOLINESS THE GREAT WANT	169
CHAPTER VII.	
PRACTICAL MOTIVES AND CONSIDERATIONS . . .	207

CHRISTIANITY AND SKEPTICISM :

1. WIDESPREAD PREVALENCE OF UNBELIEF . . .	225
2. CAUSES OF MODERN SKEPTICISM	238
3. ANTI-THEISTIC MATERIALISM DESCRIBED . . .	257
4. OBJECTIONS TO MATERIALISTIC EVOLUTION . .	267

PAGE

7

18

37

67

111

149

169

207

225

238

257

267

I.

The Present Religious State of the World.

Man knows not in what rank to place himself. He is obviously astray, and fallen from his true place without being able to find it again. He seeks it everywhere with uneasiness and without success, in impenetrable darkness.

PASCAL.

Is there no balm in Gilead? Is there no physician there? Why then is not the health of the daughter of my people recovered?

JEREMIAH.

With offerings of devotion
Ships from the isles shall meet,
And pour the wealth of ocean
In tribute at His feet.

O'er every foe victorious,
He on His throne shall rest,
From age to age more glorious,
All blessing and all blest.

MONTGOMERY.



LIVING EPISTLES.

CHAPTER I.

THE PRESENT RELIGIOUS CONDITION OF THE WORLD.

SIN and Salvation are the two chief themes of Divine Revelation. The guilty and depraved condition of the whole human race, and the fulness and fitness of God's remedy for the world's woes, are the central truths around which are grouped all the facts, precepts and promises of the Old and New Testaments. The admonitions of the Bible are notes of solemn warning against the prevailing forms of iniquity. Its promises are voices of hope and deliverance to those who desire restoration. Its histories are either dark with illustrations of the perverting and ruinous nature of sin ; or bright with inspiring examples of the power of Divine grace to

give victory over spiritual enemies and consolation in suffering.

Whatever flattering fancies may mislead the children of disobedience, the colors in which the Word of God depicts our fallen humanity are dark and repulsive. The whole race is represented as by nature enslaved by the god of this world, willingly wearing the chains of a cruel and degrading bondage. But the Gospel proclaims to these lost myriads, that the glorious liberty of the children of God is the attainable privilege of all who receive and obey Christ. The unsaved world is steeped in thick and perilous darkness; in which men cherish misleading delusions respecting both God and themselves. But Christ, who is the true Light of the world, revealing by His Spirit those deep things of God which the world by its wisdom can never know, promises that those who follow Him "shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life." "The whole world lieth in wickedness," smitten with a loathsome and fatal disease; but Christ is the Good Physician, who healeth and giveth life, able "to save them to the uttermost who come unto God by Him." If earth is a valley of dry bones, whose teeming population is dead in trespasses and sins, the prophetic word gives promise of a time,

when the breath of heaven shall quicken them into a new life. Everywhere the standard of wicked rebellion has been raised against a just and gracious Sovereign. But, in the Gospel, we learn that our offended King has sent forth ambassadors, beseeching these rebels, in Christ's stead, to be reconciled to God. If sinners are represented as perishing of hunger in a far-off land, God is a loving father, waiting to be gracious; infinitely willing to give the bread and water of life to every returning prodigal who confesses his sin and seeks forgiveness. "All have sinned and come short of the glory of God." The children of men "have turned aside every one to his own way." "The whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint." Everywhere sin has abounded unto death. But the promises of mercy cover all mortal want and woe, with wings of heavenly healing and life.

"Earth has no sorrows that heaven cannot heal."

"The Scripture hath shut up all under sin, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe." It is the avowed purpose of God, that by the preaching of the Gospel shall be made known, to this suffering and diseased world, the news of salvation from those ills which no earthly skill or power can remove. "The knowledge

of the Lord shall cover the earth, as the waters cover the sea." "The isles shall wait for His law." The remedy which the Gospel makes known is everywhere declared to be fully adequate to the world's need; and the faithfulness of God is pledged for its success. The assurance is given that, where sin has abounded, grace shall much more abound; till this fallen and alienated world is reconciled to God, lifted up from the dark slavery of sin into the light of salvation. It is impossible to contemplate these scriptural representations of a promised reign of righteousness, without being prompted to ask: By what agencies are these results to be achieved? How far have they been accomplished?

The Divine Word teaches us, that "salvation is of the Lord." Without Christ we can do nothing. But it is clearly indicated in the Holy Scriptures that these glorious visions of a restored and sanctified world are to be brought about through the instrumentality of those who by faith have been made partakers of salvation, and constitute God's witnessing Church in the world. Whatever pretentious remedies the godless philosophy and science of our day may propose, there is convincing evidence to prove that a living Church, bearing a faithful testimony for Christ in the world, by doctrine and

life, is a Divinely chosen agency, to make known the way of life to those who sit in darkness and the shadow of death. Beyond doubt, this is God's plan of saving men. Intellectual culture, wise legal enactments, and increase of wealth and physical comfort, are utterly ineffectual to heal the moral leprosy that has smitten the whole family of man with its virus. The only power that can enlighten the conscience, and quicken the dead soul into life, is the power of the Holy Spirit. But it is the Holy Spirit acting—not arbitrarily and apart from human agency—but through the medium of renewed hearts.

When I speak of the Church in this essay, I do not mean the Church regarded as an organized association for maintaining the public ordinances of religion, so much as the Church regarded as the united body of all who profess to love and trust the one living Saviour. The work of the Church, as an organized body, I fully recognize in all its greatness; but it is to the work of individual Christians, in their personal character, that our present inquiry chiefly relates. Each saved sinner is a tree planted in the Lord's garden, to bear fruits of holiness for God's glory. To the children of God to-day, as well as to those of a former age, the declaration applies: "Ye are my witnesses, saith the Lord, that I am

God." "Ye are the light of the world." It is the Divinely appointed duty of the members of Christ's Church in the world, to let their light so shine before men, that they, by beholding the beauty of holiness wrought out in living example, may be led to acknowledge and glorify their Father in heaven. If the world is regarded as a field, in which the seeds of truth are to be sown, those who believe and obey the Gospel are God's husbandmen. If this earth is represented as a rebellious kingdom that has thrown off its allegiance to its rightful Sovereign, it is to be subdued and won back again, by the army of the living God, valiantly fighting under "the Captain of our salvation." In the New Testament we learn that God so highly honored human agency, that he sent a holy angel to instruct the devout Cornelius to send for the Apostle Peter, that he might hear from him the words of salvation. Not only unto the tenants of earth does God speak through such agency, but St. Paul tells us it was the Divine intention that "unto the principalities and powers, in heavenly places, might be known by the Church the manifold wisdom of God." Not that we have any power of ourselves to win these victories. The great Apostle of the Gentiles, contemplating the relations and obligations of God's witnesses to those who are

saved, and to them who are lost, is so overburdened with conscious responsibility that he exclaims, "And who is sufficient for these things"? In true humility of spirit he answers his own question, and reveals the source of all Christian strength and victory in the inspiring words: "But our sufficiency is of God."

Having ascertained the means by which God works we proceed to ask: How is the Church succeeding in the accomplishment of the great work assigned her by her risen Redeemer? How do the results attained compare with the promises of the Bible? How goes the battle between the hosts of darkness and the soldiers of the Cross? These are inquiries which it behooves all Christians to ask with deep seriousness, and to answer with unshrinking frankness. Even though impartial inquiry should bring to our knowledge painful and discouraging facts, we should not shrink from it on that account. It is our interest to know the whole truth. It would be deemed childish folly for a merchant to decline to examine the state of his business, lest he should discover things that needed correction. It is a great mistake to assume that Christian loyalty forbids us to use any language but praise and approval towards the Church; or that it is a proof of

hostility to Christianity to point out the defects and faults of Christians. "Faithful are the wounds of a friend, but the kisses of an enemy are deceitful." Every wise general deems it essential to success, not only to have a correct estimate of the strength of the enemy's forces, but also to know the condition and discipline of the army with which he hopes to defeat them. A skilful physician carefully examines the nature of the disease before he attempts to apply the remedy. Self-approving satisfaction is as hurtful to churches as to individuals. In communities, as well as in individuals, a discovery and confession of what is wrong must precede reformation. We easily drift into thinking our little systems and theories incapable of improvement. The Ahabs, who are bent upon working out their own ruin, always regard the reproving Elijahs as enemies who trouble Israel. Many of the great hero-reformers, whose names live in the memory of men as benefactors of humanity, were persecuted by their contemporaries, as foes of the cause to which they rendered such signal service. There is, on the part of many Christians, a disposition to dwell only upon what is bright and gratifying; and to recoil with cowardly apprehension from looking on facts that are discreditable to our Christian civilization. But loyalty to truth, and love for

Christ, should prompt us to beware of concealing unpalatable facts, and prophesying smooth things.

I do not underestimate or disparage the value of what has been accomplished by the agency of the Christian Church in the past. Christianity has produced types of self-denying nobleness and goodness, that could never have blessed the world, but for the power of the Word and Spirit of God. Great moral victories have been won over the most potent forms of evil, that no human might or wisdom could have gained. He must be insensible to the influence of great truths, who can survey the history of Christianity, without finding in its struggles and victories abundant reason to make him "thank God and take courage." But, while duly recognizing all this, I deem it impossible to compare the prophetic pictures of the triumphs of the Gospel with the existing state of things in the world, without finding, in the disparity between the predictions and the results, reasons for serious, anxious thought, and deep searchings of heart.

Though this is the last quarter of "the Nineteenth Century" of the Christian era, there are still more than two-thirds of the world's population who are not even named by the name of Christ. They are ignorant of God's character and claims, yielding

homage to the creations of their polluted imaginations. They are without the consolation of faith and hope in God. Without the joy of knowing Christ as their Saviour. Without the hope of eternal life. Steeped in debasing superstitions. Wasting life in low and sensual pursuits. Alienated from the life of God through the darkness of their hearts. Vainly seeking to satisfy the hunger of the soul with the husks of perverted fancies. And yet, unconscious of their loss and degradation. The spread of Christianity in the world would surely have been more rapid than it has been, had there not been some serious defect in the Church itself—some want of full, earnest sympathy with the great purpose of the Incarnation of the Son of God.

But, leaving the heathen world out of our consideration, how many things do we see in Christian countries, which all true believers must sorrowfully deplore? In many nominally Christian lands, a system of ritualistic forms and priestly inventions has been substituted for living, spiritual religion. In those countries where Christianity has won its greatest triumphs, a large proportion of the population rejects its claims, and has not even the form of godliness. Millions of money are readily raised for worldly enterprises, while there is great difficulty

in raising less than a tithe of these amounts for religious purposes. The crimes, which the Bible most explicitly brands with Divine condemnation, are continually tainting the atmosphere of social life with their poisonous breath. Intemperance, in spite of all the philanthropic efforts of earnest Christian workers in the past, still stalks abroad in the prosecution of its work of ruin and death. The revelations of mercantile dishonesty, which are constantly arresting public attention, reflect dishonor upon the Christian integrity of the communities where such disreputable transactions transpire. In too many instances the churches seem to exert but little influence upon the ungodliness and disbelief which prevail around them. Thousands, who display all the signs of religious indifference, live in the light of Christian privileges, and in constant association with professedly religious people, without giving any evidence of spiritual improvement. Christian people, after years of intercourse with their unconverted neighbors, frequently appear to have exerted over them no power to bring them nearer to God. Large and wealthy congregations remain for years comparatively stationary in numbers, as if stricken with spiritual sterility. Surely, it is not too much to expect that every Christian worker

should, in the course of each year, lead at least one soul to Christ? Yet, in how many cases, large numbers of church members spend year after year, without being instrumental in saving one sinner from the error of his way! And, all this time, thousands to whom they have access are living and dying, without any more sign of religious principle or belief than the heathen tribes of Africa.

In many cases, the children of prominent members of the different Christian churches, brought up with the advantages of religious training and worship, become lovers of worldly pleasure and folly, and strangers to the power of vital godliness. Not unfrequently, the sons of Christian parents drink in the poison of the literature of disbelief, and repudiate the faith of their fathers. These pernicious seeds of doubt are being scattered widely; and are already beginning to bring forth their baleful fruits. The love of wealth—the desire to get rich rapidly—is also extensively overpowering truth and justice, and creating a false standard of worth, even among Christians.

It is scarcely possible for any one whose heart has been quickened by the love of Christ to study these sad facts, without being impelled to ask the question which Jeremiah asked respecting his

people: "Is there no balm in Gilead? is there no physician there? why then is not the health of the daughter of my people recovered?" Or, in other words, to ask, why the children of God do not evince greater zeal and power in doing the work of Christ in the world? We are compelled to feel that there is a serious defect somewhere. When a chemist attempts to perform an experiment, and fails to secure the result sought, he at once tries to find out what conditions of success have been wanting, in order to ascertain the cause of his failure. He knows that there is no change in the properties and forces of nature; and that his failure in securing the desired effect has been caused by some failure of conditions essential to success. When the commander of a vessel, crossing the ocean, fails to reach the point which at a given time he expected to gain, or when he is unexpectedly confronted by the sight of land, he knows there must have been some mistake in his reckoning; and he instantly applies all his skill to discover the cause why his actual position does not coincide with his supposed one. There is always a cause for failure. So, in the sphere of the spiritual, failure is not a mere accident. There are laws of spiritual progress to which we must conform in order to gain success. If there is

in the sphere of Christian labor a failure to secure those results which God's Word warrants us to expect, we may feel confident it is always because we have not wrought in harmony with God's appointed order. There is always some human hindrance, which it is our duty to discover and remove. The grandeur of the objects which the Church in the world seeks to accomplish, and the incalculably deplorable consequences of failure, render this duty unspeakably weighty and imperative.

If Christian influence in the world is comparatively feeble and ineffective, the fault is not on God's part. It is not because His mercy is limited, or the provisions of His love insufficient. Not because the Word of Life has lost its power. Not because the riches of Divine mercy have not been made known to the children of men. There is no change in the heart of God, nor in the power of His Spirit. "Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, to-day, and forever," is still exalted a Prince and a Saviour to bestow upon His disciples grace to help in every time of need. Neither is this feebleness of Christian influence to be ascribed to the want of any particular form of Church government. Good machinery is doubtless a good thing. But the most imperfect organizations

become effective when they are used by men clothed with power from on high. The organization in all the churches is generally adapted to combine and utilize the working power of the membership they embrace. The more deeply we ponder the question, the more irresistably are we forced to the conclusion, that the main cause of the feebleness and inefficiency of the Christian churches will be found in the defective type of character and life presented by those who are called by the name of Christ. This will become more apparent by contemplating the place and power of a true Christian life, in the Divine order of things.

THY KINGDOM COME.

MATT. vi. 10

WIDE earth is fill'd with sin and sorrow,
Enslaved by Satan's chain ;
We know full well each fateful morrow
Will tell its tale of pain.
Error proclaims her gilded falsehoods,
And Truth seems strangely dumb ;
Man's cruelty makes ceaseless wailing,—
Lord, let Thy kingdom come !

Millions, deep-sunk in rayless darkness,
Thy love have never known ;
And in their blind, misguided folly,
Still worship wood and stone.
Dispel their darkness with Thy presence,
Call each lost wanderer home ;
To every hungry soul and weary,
O let Thy kingdom come !

Nation with nation madly wages
Unpitying, bloody strife,
Deeming their sordid aims more sacred
Than peace and human life.
Earth has no med'cine for these evils,
To which all hearts succumb ;
O hear our prayers, Thou King immortal !
And let Thy kingdom come !

Men shut their hearts against Thy mercy,
Allured by baseless dreams ;
Or use Thy blessed name to strengthen
Their godiess, selfish schemes.
Thousands, who name Thy name, deny Thee,
By Satan's wiles o'ercome ;
Thy saints in every land implore Thee,
Lord, let Thy kingdom come !

Tyrants still reign to crush the lowly,
Who, wronged and injured, die ;
The woes of innocence for vengeance
To Thee unceasing cry.
Come in Thy peerless power and glory,
This world from Satan win ;
Come to our hearts, all sin expelling,—
O let Thy reign begin !

II.

The Power of a True Christian Life.

Still shines the light of holy lives
Like star-beams over doubt ;
Each sainted memory, Christ-like, drives
Some dark possession out.

JOHN G. WHITTIER.

As the mother pearl-fish dwells in the sea without receiving a drop of salt water ; and as towards the Chelidonian Islands, springs of fresh water may be found in the midst of the sea ; and as the fire-fly passes through the flame without burning its wings ; so a vigorous and healthy soul may live in the world without being infected by any of its humors, may discover sweet springs of piety amidst its salt waters, and fly among the flames of earthly concupiscence with the wings of the holy desires of the devout life.

FRANCIS DE SALES.

Not one of the countless voyagers,
Of life's mysterious main,
Has laid down his burden of sorrows
That has lived and loved in vain.

From the white tents of the crusaders
The phantoms of glory have gone ;
But the zeal of the barefooted hermit
In humanity's heart lives on.

ALICE CAREY.



CHAPTER II.

THE POWER OF A TRUE CHRISTIAN LIFE.

GOD has made us susceptible of being influenced by the sentiments and deeds of others. There is potent inspiration for the work of life in fellowship with great souls. As in the hour of danger, the brave and hopeful impart something of their courage to the fainthearted and cowardly, so the example of men of high religious purpose and consistent integrity strengthens the faltering good intentions of those who are feebler than themselves. A brave and generous action kindles admiration, and quickens the love of what is right, in all minds not dead to the power of goodness. A cruel and selfish deed, especially when performed by those from whom we had reason to expect a widely different course, provokes aversion and contempt; and brings sus-

picion and reproach on the principles of those who are guilty of such acts, and on all who hold them. As fire spreads and transmutes into its own nature all congenial material on which it exerts its influence, so the ruling sentiment of every life tends to set other natures on fire with its own impulses, and to conform them to its own moral likeness. As heated bodies have a radiating power, by which they give out to other bodies in contact with them a portion of their heat, and thus tend to bring these bodies to their own temperature, so good and bad characters, the true and the false, the noble and the base, create around them an atmosphere impregnated with their characteristic spirit; and are respectively centres of a tendency to assimilate all that they touch to their own nature. The example of a true and consistent life lifts us up towards a higher plane of being. Not merely does it set before us a goal towards which to run, an object worthy of imitation; it is itself a silent, but powerful moral force, drawing us towards the ideal it presents.

The example and spirit of the ungodly, who are constantly seeking their happiness in the forbidden paths of sin, taint and corrupt those who are exposed to their vitiating influence; unless the power of vital religious principle and habit is strong enough

to repel and vanquish it. "One sinner destroyeth much good." The ten unbelieving and cowardly spies, who brought back an evil report from the goodly land of promise, infected the whole multitude of the children of Israel with the spirit of cowardice and rebellion ; which caused them to be kept out of Canaan forty years, till all that faithless generation died in the wilderness. In beings untainted by sin, and having no depraved tendencies, examples of folly and wickedness could only awaken emotions of sorrow and aversion. The holy angels who wait upon the heirs of salvation, as they behold the unholy passions that burn in human breasts, and the revolting forms of crime that pollute this fallen world, must recoil with grief and horror from the scenes of guilt and depravity that meet their eyes. In such perfectly holy beings, there can be nothing in their nature to respond to the spirit of sinful deeds ; or to tempt them to cherish an approving sympathy with them. But, unhappily, with beings in whose nature exists the germ of disobedience—the tendency to love sin—the effect is very different. Evil example acts upon these seeds of wrong within us, like the sunshine and showers which draw forth from a sin-cursed soil the luxuriant weeds of a noxious vegetation. Internal corruption and treachery

give power to external temptations. The bad heart gives a ruinous influence to the bad example.

Character is mightier than professions of faith. Consistency is more convincing than logical arguments. Kindness and patience are more subduing than rebuke and refutation. It may be safely affirmed that the impression, made by the spirit and character of Christians upon the unconverted, is greater than what is made by their direct intentional efforts. You may not be able to induce those who mind only earthly things to read the Bible, or study the evidences of its Divine authorship. They may not be able to comprehend the force of learned and logical arguments. You may never secure an opportunity of expounding to them your views on theological subjects. But they cannot escape from the influence of a godly life. It will preach to those who witness it daily wordless sermons of most persuasive eloquence. It is an argument for the truth and power of religion, which the most obtuse can understand. The power of a loving, self-denying act all can feel and appreciate. A life in harmony with the principles by which it professes to be governed, is its own best interpreter. The tender sympathy and patience of Christ alone can qualify us to be faithful witnesses for Him in the world.

There is no power that can melt and win the heart like love. The most persuasive arguments may fail. Authority may lose its power to secure obedience. The stern command, backed by truth and right, may be ineffectual. But "charity never faileth." Love is the great invincible power in the moral universe. It is the sunshine that thaws the ice of prejudice and opposition. It is the spring breath that quickens the cold soil of humanity into fruitfulness. It is the philosopher's stone, whose wondrous alchemy transmutes the baser metals into gold. In persuasion, it is the key that opens the gates of the heart.

The full significance of this truth is yet but imperfectly comprehended by the majority of Christians. The want of a larger measure of Christly love in the heart makes many lives comparatively fruitless. There may be great zeal and clear views of truth; yet, if the spirit of love be wanting, the results will be small. While Christians should be unsparing in their condemnation of sins against God, and sins against men, there should be more of tender sorrow and pitying sympathy for the erring in their feelings towards the wrong-doer, than of angry hatred, or unrelenting bitterness. When those whom we wish to influence and benefit are con-

vinced that we have a sincere desire to do them good, they are already half won. Nothing else can be substituted for love. I do not mean the simulation of tenderness—the hollow pretence of a feeling that is not really felt; but a genuine Christian compassion for souls made in God's image, with capacities of highest joy or deepest woe. There is a subtle magnetism in true love, that no counterfeit possesses. It may be asked: How can we make the impression, on the minds of those with whom we associate, that we cherish this loving concern for them? Simply by being really concerned about them. If we have this spirit of love, it will reveal itself in its own way. If we do not truly possess it, all efforts to make others think we do will be as unavailing as the desire of Simon Magus for the gift of the Holy Ghost.

In the family, the school, the church, and the daily business of life, the love of Christ, as the controlling power of the character, is essential to exert a healthy and fruitful spiritual influence. The spirit and tone of the family life, which is what the character of the parents makes it, are far more potent in moulding the character of children, than the lessons and instructions which have been impressed upon their memory. If the prevailing current of the

family life be harsh, selfish and sordid, these features will not fail to re-appear in the spirit of the children. If kindness, integrity, and unselfish generosity pervade the atmosphere of home, as certainly as the plastic metal takes the impress of the die stamped upon it, the future life of the children, reared in such a circle, will show the impress of these virtues. Often, after the mind has relaxed its grasp of the doctrines inculcated, has the memory of a tender mother's love and prayers proved to be the rope, by which a wandering prodigal has been drawn out of the engulfing waves of sin. This truth is thus beautifully expressed by a recent writer: "Where the light of a noble example has shone upon the path of children, they carry with them a spiritual illumination. When the sun has set that kindled them, they beam down as with the soft lustre of the moon. They go out into the great world, bearing a lofty standard. They may be told by cynics that such lofty virtues as integrity no longer exist. They know better. They have seen it delivering from temptation. They have felt it sustaining under calamity. They have known it triumph over death. If it be only to the grave of such parents they can go back, there are holy lessons, which blossom from their dust with fresh vitality."

It may be safely affirmed that, in general, the unconscious influence, which silently flows out from the spirit and character, is more powerful in impressing others, than the conscious, intentional efforts put forth to convince and lead those whom we deem in error to adopt our views. What a man is more largely determines his moral power over others, than what he DOES with a purpose to change their opinion and character. If this unconscious influence is not in harmony with our intentional acts, it will neutralize their power to a great extent. It is only when the acts of the life are strengthened and supported by the character, that they are likely to be powerfully effective for good. The fact that this silent influence is constant, and fruitful of results in others, is a reason why Christians should desire earnestly to possess a spirit and character, which shall be a healthy moral force in relation to others. We are not responsible for the unconscious evil effects to others, which may result from their misinterpretation of our acts or words. When people unjustifiably make any act of ours a pretext for wrong-doing on their part, they must bear the blame. But for those influences which directly result from our character, we are accountable. One of the most acute of modern theologians, speaking of this kind of

influence, forcibly says: "They are honest influences, following our character as the shadow follows the sun. And, therefore, we are much more certainly responsible for them, and their effects on the world. They go streaming from us in all directions, though in channels that we do not see, poisoning or healing around the roots of society, and among the hidden wells of character. If good ourselves, they are good; if bad, they are bad. And since they reflect so exactly our character, it is impossible to doubt our responsibility for their effects upon the world." (Dr. Bushnell.)

No one can read the epistles of St. Paul, without being as much impressed by the lowly, unselfish, tender and heroic spirit which breathes through them, as by the grand and weighty truths which he presents. Though the record of his life-work is so brief, and though he is the most eminent expounder of the doctrines of Christ, yet his brave and saintly character is imperishably enshrined in Christian hearts, as one of the great powers of Christianity. Though he was an inspired revealer of profound spiritual truths, yet his writings derive much of their interest from the light they shed upon his lofty life-work. Nor can we resist the conviction that, while he lived, the wonderful effects of his public

ministry resulted more largely from his character, than from anything peculiar, either in his message or his manner of delivering it. And all the great souls, "who rule us from their sceptred urns," move us more by what they were than by what they taught—more by moral goodness than by intellectual greatness. The men and women, who have won imperishable renown, as successful Christian workers and benefactors of humanity, whose names are the watchwords of Christian endeavor, gained their eminence, not by virtue of superior gifts of intellect denied to others; but by those qualities of the heart, that are the chief elements of character. They are enthroned as unfading examples in Christian affection, not so much because of their great knowledge, as because of their great love. Not so much by superior mental powers, as by their burning zeal. Not so much by peerless eloquence of argument, as by consistent adherence to Christian principle. Not so much by their intellectual endowments, as by the use they made of them. Not so much by the adoption of any peculiar methods of work, as by using the old methods with fervent zeal and Christly tenderness. Not by qualities, rare and unattainable among men; but by elements of power, in a great degree, within the reach of all Christians. As we

wander in thought over the great moral battle-fields of the past, and wonder at the godly heroism of the saints of former times, it is our blood-bought privilege to know that we may live as they lived, and conquer as they conquered, and triumph as they triumphed ; "for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon Him." "For every one that asketh receiveth ; and he that seeketh findeth ; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened."

This truth, respecting the power of character and life, as an inspiring and elevating spiritual force among men, is directly taught and impressively illustrated in the Holy Scriptures. The Great Teacher says : "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven." "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another." The disciples re-echo the teaching of the Master. The Apostle Peter says : "For so is the will of God, that with well-doing ye may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men." And again : "Having your conversation honest among the Gentiles ; that whereas they speak against you as evil-doers, they may by your good works which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation." St. Paul urges the same consideration, in the Epistle

to the Philippians: "Do all things without murmurings and disputings: that ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world." From such declarations, we conclude that it is God's purpose that every saved sinner should be a living epistle, in which all may read a practical testimony for the efficacy of His saving grace,—a witness for Christ in the world, showing, not merely by the confession of the lips, but still more by the completeness of his victory over the temptations and sins which once had mastery over him, that Christ is "able to save to the uttermost them that come unto God by Him."

"As every sparkling drop of dew
Reflects the image, pure and true,
Of the bright orb from which it drew
Its pearly beauty, rich and rare,
So should each thought His likeness bear,
Each word and deed His grace declare."

The manner in which great lessons of duty are taught in the Bible is also a practical recognition of the truth, that example is mightier than admonition. To many it has seemed mysterious why a book, which claims to be a revelation of God's will, should be so largely occupied with facts of history, and

incidents of biography. The best solution of this apparent incongruity will be found in a consideration of the fact that the Bible is a revelation to MEN; and in the adaptation of its method of teaching to the capacity of the human mind, as well as in the character of the truths taught, it presents evidences of its Divine authorship. It may not be the style for angels; but it reveals deep knowledge of the human heart. It is a characteristic of man's mental and moral constitution, that principles wrought out in living action have greater power to awaken interest and influence character, than abstract doctrines, however true. The history of angels could not yield human beings encouragement, nor evoke sympathetic interest. But we are touched by the joys and sorrows of men of like passions with ourselves. We are stimulated by even reading of the struggles and trials of men and women, who have trodden the same thorny paths and battled with the same temptations as ourselves; and in whose breasts swelled and waned the same hopes and fears, that have brightened or darkened our own lives. The good and bad examples of the Bible come home to our hearts with peculiar power; because they are true pictures of real human experience, and the human in us throbs in responsive sympathy to the

plea of brotherhood. St. Paul says : " For this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might show forth all long-suffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on Him to life everlasting." And he exhorts the Hebrews to " be not slothful," but followers of those " who through faith and patience inherit the promises." St. James admonishes the Jewish Christians, scattered abroad by persecution, to " take the prophets who have spoken in the name of the Lord, as an example of suffering affliction and of patience." John, the beloved disciple, speaks of himself as " your brother and companion in tribulation, and in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ." Our Divine Redeemer's human sympathy, because He was tempted in all things like as we are, is urged by St. Paul as a reason why the trembling believer may come boldly to the throne of grace ; and the children of God are to be patient in suffering and persecution, " because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow His steps."

This principle is constantly recognized, and receives its most impressive illustration in the Gospel narratives. The Gospels are not a code of rules for the regulation of conduct. Not an apocalypse, revealing profound spiritual mysteries. Not a creed,

embracing an enumeration of dogmas to be believed as matters of faith. In these simple records of the words and works of the Christ of God, we have the history of a perfect life, the portrait of a sinless manhood, which is itself a glorious revelation, shedding light upon the perplexing problems of being. "In Him was life, and the life was the light of men." That life is the living embodiment of the whole Gospel. It is the mightiest spiritual force known to men or angels—the central fountain from which flow out those streams of hallowing influence, which inspire all that is noblest in Christian endeavor. This is the sun that warms the dull, frozen soil of our humanity into life and fruitfulness. Through the medium of Christ's humanity, we behold the Divine glory. There the wisdom, power, and love of our Father in heaven assume human forms, which bring them within the range of our comprehension; and invest them with a power to kindle faith and love, that as abstract objects of thought they could not possess. In the earthly life of our Redeemer, the glory of heaven comes down to earth. The sublime abstractions of heavenly wisdom are crystallized into concrete verities of peerless power and beauty. In every hour of conflict and suffering, we may find consolation and strength, by remembering

the wondrous life of the Incarnate Son of God. As we meditate upon the patient forbearance, and brave, brotherly tenderness of the Man of Sorrows, towards erring and sorrowing men, our faith is girded with a diviner energy, when we remember His inspiring words: "He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father."

From the history of useful Christians of former times, a great cloud of witnesses might be summoned, to testify to the power of character in extending the kingdom of Christ among men. There are few Christians living, that have not a personal experience of the potency of this influence. Who cannot name some godly friend, whose devout spirit and consistent life were an unanswerable argument for the truth and power of the Christian religion? Justin Martyr confesses that he was induced to leave philosophy and become a Christian scholar, by beholding the innocent and godly lives of the primitive Christians; especially by hearing them pray to God for the welfare of those who sought their ruin. When the native converts in Madagascar used to present themselves for baptism, they were often asked: "What first led you to think of becoming Christians? Was it any particular sermon, or the reading of God's Word?" The answer usually was, that the changed

conduct of others, who had become Christians, was what first arrested their attention. "I knew this man to be a thief; that one was a drunkard; another was cruel and unkind to his family. Now, they are all changed. The thief is an honest man; the drunkard is sober and respectable; and he that was cruel has become gentle and kind. There must be something good in a religion that can work such changes."

In the case of those who stand as the advocates and representatives of a nationality, a system of education, or a religious faith, there is a special influence exerted for good or evil, besides what arises from the common tendency of human beings to imitate the examples which they witness. They are regarded as examples of the type of manhood which their system or faith produces. Hence, every professing Christian is looked upon as a specimen of the fruit which religion yields; and is constantly making either a favorable, or unfavorable impression respecting religion, upon the minds of those with whom he associates. If we frequently point to the deplorable moral condition of heathen and Mohammedan lands, and the ignorance and superstition of Roman Catholic countries, in proof of the ineffective and injurious character of the systems of religion

which prevail in those lands, we need not wonder if unbelievers apply the same practical test to communities of Protestant Christians. Every church, and every individual Christian, must stand or fall by this practical test. "By their fruits ye shall know them." That is the best kind of religion which produces the noblest type of Christian character. That is the most Apostolic Church which is most successful in leading sinners out of the way of transgression into the path of life. If our religion does not make us braver and truer, more patient and forgiving, more unselfish and Christlike, than those who are destitute of religion, men who judge all systems by their practical results, will conclude that such a religion is not worth possessing. Even when it is the want of true religion, and not its possession, that causes the blemishes in the life, this does not prevent these faults of nominal Christians bringing reproach and discredit upon the religion of Christ. Every one who in words professes to love God, but whose life is not in harmony with such a profession, bears false witness against the Gospel salvation. Their faithless lives virtually deny Christ's power to save.

I would not depreciate the value of the public ministry of God's Word, nor the organized agency

of the churches. They have been crowned with the Divine benediction, and are doing gloriously for the truth of God in the world. But there is nothing so greatly needed to increase the influence of the children of God among men, as more of the silent eloquence of holy lives—a larger measure of the spirit of Christ in the hearts of His witnessing people. Doubt and disbelief are assailing the faith of many. Nothing will roll back these surging waves of skepticism, like a personal experience of the peace of God that passeth understanding in the hearts of the members of all our churches. No mere speculative belief—no mere assent to scriptural creeds—is sufficient to qualify the Church of to-day to accomplish her work in the world. The weapons of her warfare must be taken out of the armory of heaven, and tempered with love and faith. The nature of the work to be done shows us the kind of instrument it requires. If the wood is hard, the axe should be sharp. If the sea is rough and the voyage long, the ship should be staunch and true. If the enemy is numerous and powerful, we should meet force with superior force. So the work to be done by God's people in the world, the enemies that are to be vanquished, and the prevailing characteristics of the times, may indicate to us the qualifi-

cations essential to success. The fact that the Church is to battle with, and overthrow the foes of the Cross in the world, makes the spiritual state of her members of the deepest importance; because upon their fitness for the work their success in a great measure depends. The influence of the whole body of believers is determined by the character of the individuals that constitute its component parts. If the Church is to teach the world the knowledge of salvation, she must herself possess and love "the truth as it is in Jesus." If she would successfully lead the slaves of sense and sin to look from "the things that are seen and temporal" to those that "are unseen and eternal," she must herself rise above the slavery of earthly things. If she is to be a mirror of the benevolence of Christ, she must be pure and true; so as to present no distorted image, but to exhibit "the King in His beauty." If we are to melt the icy coldness of the world's unbelief, and quicken its deadness into life, our own hearts must throb with the life and love of our risen Saviour. We want a saintlier type of Christian manhood and womanhood, whose holy lives will silence and rebuke the adversaries of religion. In these times of doubt and self-seeking, we specially want men of strong faith and self-sacrificing ardor. We want them in

the pulpit—men of keen intelligence, broad charity, and fervent piety; who will

“Allure to brighter worlds, and lead the way.”

We want them in our political and judicial offices—men of incorruptible Christian integrity, manly independence, and true patriotism; who will give practical evidence that they believe God's law is broad enough to cover all positions in life. We want them as editors of our public journals—men of broad unsectional views, who are unwarpèd by partizanship; who feel that they are accountable to God for the manner in which they discharge their obligations as educators of public opinion. We want them in the marts of trade and business—men of unswerving rectitude, who will rise above the low conventional standards of morality by which bad men excuse their fraudulent selfishness—men to whom wealth will be a means of greater usefulness and culture, and not a mere instrument of sordid gratification. We want them in our Sunday Schools, and in our public institutions of learning—men and women whose hearts are tempered with the love and patience of Christ, to whom the wearing toil of teaching the young will be something more than a grinding taskwork; who will feel it to be a grand

and holy thing to be permitted to direct the first awakenings of intellectual life, and influence the destiny of immortal spirits, capable of highest joy or deepest woe. We want them everywhere, in the city and in the country, on the land and on the sea, wherever human beings gather to do the work of life—men and women who, in all the varied spheres of action, shall be consistent witnesses for the power and benignity of the Christian religion. Without this practical testimony of the life, the direct efforts of the Church will be shorn of their power to achieve the work which they are designed to accomplish; and the promises of the Gospel will appear to the world to be “dreams that never come true.”

The Rev. Dr. Norman Macleod very forcibly says: “The world, if ever it is to be reformed by men, and through men, can only be so by the personal intercourse of living men—living epistles, not dead ones. Love, meekness, kindness, forbearance, unselfishness, manifested in human souls, uttering themselves by word, look, and deed, and not by mere description of these sentiments or essays upon them, can alone regenerate man. Neither money, nor schools, nor churches can ever be substituted for living men. Not ministers going their rounds like policemen, with black clothes and white neckties; or elders taking

statistics, nor deacons giving alms, or ladies tracts—all good, but we want Christians, whether they be smiths, or shoemakers, or tailors, or grocers, or coach drivers, or advocates, to remember their own responsibilities, their own immense influence for good, and to be personal ministers for good.”

Men of the world may close their ears against the gospel message. Warning and admonition may only provoke opposition. But a saintly life melts prejudice, as the genial sunshine melts the wintry snows. A kindly, loving spirit speaks a language which even a child can understand. A heathen, who stood in a crowd in Calcutta listening to a Missionary disputing with a Brahmin, said he knew which was right, though he did not understand the language. He knew that the man was in the wrong who lost his temper first. A young infidel was one night, after retiring to bed, contemplating the character of his mother. “I see,” said he to himself, “two unquestionable facts. First, my mother is greatly afflicted in circumstances, body, and mind; and I see that she bears up under all, by the support she derives from retiring to her closet and reading the Bible. Secondly, that she has a secret spring of comfort, of which I know nothing; while I, who give full play to my appetites, and seek pleasure by every means,

hardly ever find it. If, however, there is any such secret in religion, why may not I attain it as well as my mother? I will immediately seek it of God." And thus, the influence of Christianity, exhibited before him in its beauty by a living example, led Richard Cecil to know Christ Himself, and to glorify Him by a life of most successful devotion to His service.

Cases of conversion, similar to that of Cecil, are very numerous; though not so likely to be prominently recorded as conversions under other circumstances. Some years ago, during the pastorate of Rev. Dr. White in Scottsville, Virginia, a young man presented himself before the session as a candidate for church membership. The session was somewhat curious to know what had led to the change in the young man, as he had been wild and thoughtless. The pastor asked him if any sermon or book had impressed him. He promptly answered, "No." "What was it then? Did any one speak to you on the subject of religion?" The same answer was given. "Will you then state to the session what led you first to think of your soul's eternal welfare?" The reply was: "I live in the same boarding-house with J. Y." "Well, did he talk with you about your soul?" "No, not till I sought an interview with

him," was his reply. "But," he continued, "there was a sweetness in his disposition, a heavenly-mindedness, a holy aroma about his whole life and demeanor, that made me feel that he had a source of comfort and peace to which I was a stranger. There was a daily beauty in his life, that made my life seem ugly and hateful. I became more and more dissatisfied with myself every time I saw him; and though he never spoke to me on the subject of personal religion, till I first spoke to him, yet his whole life was a constant sermon to me. He was a living epistle, speaking by actions so clearly that I could resist no longer; and accordingly I went and sought an interview with him. We held repeated conversations together. He pointed me to Christ, prayed with me and counselled me, and watched over me. The result was, I found Christ as my own Saviour, and am here desirous to profess my faith in Him before the world."

We are in danger of depreciating this influence, born of a holy life, because it operates so silently, and often invisibly to human observation. But it is wrong to assume that, because the fruits of a godly example are not always immediate and palpable, it has been fruitless and vain. "In due season we shall reap if we faint not." Scientific research teaches us

that nothing in nature is lost. The drop of rain, that comes from the ocean to moisten the thirsty earth, disappears and, when it has fulfilled its mission, mingles with the stream that is hurrying towards the sea. The particle of gas, which combines with some other elementary substance, when by combustion or some stronger chemical affinity it is released, returns to its simple state, or forms some new combination. The seed, that seems to be dying in the soil, is preparing to emerge into a new life.

“ There is no death ! the dust we tread
Shall change beneath the summer showers
To golden grain, or mellow fruit,
Or rainbow-tinted flowers.”

But can it be possible that every atom of matter bears in itself a charmed and indestructible life, and that the diviner forces of the moral and spiritual world are perishable? It cannot be. They have a nobler immortality and more undying results. No living thought can ever die. No true act is in vain. No godly life can be a failure. Even deeds, that appear to fail in securing the direct result sought, may be fruitful in accomplishing some unseen good. Among the touching incidents connected with the loss of the ill-fated *Atlantic*, which was wrecked a

few years ago, John C. Ellery, one of the stewards, told the following respecting Rosy Sheat, a little girl about three years of age: "She sat at my table," said he, "and was fond of me. When I got out, Mr. Sheat placed her in my arms in her night-dress, and asked me to save her. I thought of my own little girl of the same age in Liverpool, and I kept her as long as I could. I saw her father and mother swept away by the sea; and the little one moaned and continually called, 'Papa! papa! I am so wet!' She died in my arms; and I had not then the heart to let her drop; but handed her to a man who was stronger than myself. The man to whom I gave her perished; and both he and little Rosy were swept out to sea." His humane efforts to save the child failed, and she was lost.

When we read this sad story, we feel no disposition to regret that this kind and brave man wasted his efforts in a fruitless endeavor to accomplish what proved to be impossible. On the contrary, we admire and honor his unselfish tenderness and fidelity, under circumstances that might have excused a different course. Humanity is the richer for such an act. No deed is fruitless which strengthens confidence in our fellow-men, and quickens the pulses of what is noblest and best in our nature. The holy

martyrs, though apparently overcome by their enemies, still live in the undying power of their heroic endurance. Their faith and fortitude rebuke our languid zeal ; and inspire us to "endure hardness, as good soldiers of Jesus Christ."

WHEN forms of wrong, which truth divine has branded
As heresy to God and right,
Are praised and gilded by earth's thousands, banded
To call their darkness light.

Stand firm, and drift not with the tide prevailing,—
Still to thy King above be true ;
Spare not their idol-gods, though hate and railing
Thy Abdiel heart pursue.

Speak thou the truth in love, with zeal unshrinking,
Heedless of mortal praise or blame :
Among the throngs who live and die unthinking,
Be thou a living flame.

If true to God, whatever ills oppress thee,
When life's appointed race is run,
Thine ears shall hear the King Himself address Thee,
"Servant of God, well-done !"

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III.

Conformity to the World.

Would you say of any one place of fashionable gaiety that it makes a good ante-chamber of preparation for that house of solemn interview in which converse is held, either with the still small voice that is within, or with that God above who bids you sanctify Him at all times in your heart, and do all things to His glory ?

CHALMERS.

The soul on earth is an immortal guest,
Condemned to starve at an unreal feast ;
A spark which upward tends by Nature's force ;
A stream diverted from its parent source ;
A drop dis severed from the boundless sea ;
A moment parted from eternity ;
A pilgrim panting for the rest to come ;
An exile, anxious for his native home.

HANNAH MORE.

Crates threw his gold into the sea, saying, "I will destroy thee, lest thou destroy me !" If men do not put the love of the world to death, the love of the world will put them to death.

VENNING.



CHAPTER III.

CONFORMITY TO THE WORLD.

I.

NO emblem has been more frequently used to represent the Christian life than an ocean voyage. And none but those who have been rocked upon the billows of the mighty deep, in the actual experiences of such a voyage, can fully comprehend how appropriate this figure is. Like the ocean, life is a thing of wondrous grandeur and power—so mysterious in its nature and laws, that many of its inscrutable problems baffle the keenest research. Life, too, has its launching time, when the voyage is begun amid the anticipations of hope; and its termination, either in success and triumph, or in failure and despair. It has pearly deeps which no plummet has ever sounded, and lonely shores which no voyager has ever explored. It has fair winds and

friendly currents, which help us onward towards a happy destiny ; and foul winds and contrary currents, which drift the struggling souls of men towards the sunken reefs of failure and ruin. But, whatever storms or danger the Christian mariner may encounter, he has a true compass and a safe chart ; and, beyond, there is a peaceful haven, where those who have been true to life's sacred guiding-stars shall find satisfying, immortal rest, where mists never obscure the vision, and the wail of the tempest is heard no more.

As the mariner makes himself acquainted with the winds and tides of ocean, that he may steer his vessel accordingly, so the Christian should endeavor rightly to understand the strength and tendency of those social and moral forces, that are operating in the world around him, helping or hindering in the work of life. He should not attempt to do the work assigned him blindly and mechanically ; but with an intelligent apprehension of the hindrances to success, the difficulties to be overcome, and the true source of strength and victory.

One of the most powerful and perilous of those side currents, that drift souls out of the true heavenward course, is **WORLDLINESS**. It is not too much to say that of all the tendencies that are enervating the spiritual power of the Church and ensnaring Chris-

tians, the disposition to conform to the world is the most widely prevalent, and the most mischievous in its effects. It is not confined to any one country or class of society. It has always been, in one form or another, the most insidious foe of Christianity. Sometimes it seduced the Church from her allegiance to Christ, under the form of conformity to the prevailing sins of the times. At other times, the doctrinal teaching of the Church was corrupted by a disposition to interpret the truths of Divine Revelation, in such a way as to harmonize with a nebulous, worldly philosophy. The Word of God rings out its full and frequent warnings against this sin. The Israelites were faithfully admonished by Moses, that they should not consort with the heathen nations around them, nor learn their ways. They were not to intermarry with them, lest they should turn away their hearts from the living and true God. And yet, no other sin brought upon them so often the anger of God, as practising the worship and conforming to the customs of those who served strange gods. The New Testament gives no uncertain sound on this subject. In a still higher sense than were the Jewish people, Christians are to be "a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people." The epistles of St. Paul give great prominence to

cautions against the contagion of worldliness. "Be not conformed to this world." "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers : for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness ? and what communion hath light with darkness ? and what concord hath Christ with Belial ? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel ?" "Ye were sometimes darkness ; but now are ye light in the Lord ; walk as children of light." "And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them." St. James, not less sternly, denounces the friendship of the world. "Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God ? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God." The admonitions of St. Peter are in the same spirit. "Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul." "As obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance ; but as He who hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation." St. John, the beloved disciple, is not silent concerning this sin. "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world ; if any man love the world the love of the Father is not in him." There must be serious danger

to be apprehended from an evil, against which such urgent and solemn warnings are given.

It is well that we should understand what is meant by the world, which we are so strongly forbidden to love; and against the infection of whose spirit we are so sedulously guarded. The term world, in the Holy Scriptures, sometimes means the material world in which we live; as in Psalm 24. 1: "The earth is the Lord's and the fulness thereof; the world and they that dwell therein." There is nothing wrong in loving and admiring the world in this sense. The rocks and soil of the world are not sinful, as they are incapable of any moral quality. Its lakes and rivers, valleys and mountains, are types of grandeur and beauty, which proclaim their Creator the God of order and beauty. All His works bear the impress of His power, wisdom, and goodness.

It sometimes means the inhabitants of the world. As in 2 Peter 3. 6: "Whereby the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished." Before the world, in this sense, the people of God are to let their light shine. It is not wrong to love the inhabitants of the world, with the compassion and tenderness of Christ, sinful and erring though they be. "For God so loved" this guilty "world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in

Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." Though prodigals, they are by creation the children of the great Father of all. They are our erring brethren, according to the flesh.

Sometimes the term world means all the blessings and enjoyments of this present earthly life. As in the words of the Saviour, Matt. 16. 26 : "What is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul?" The gifts of God's providence, those earthly mercies by which the wants of our mental, social, and physical nature are supplied, may be duly estimated by us without guilt. The religion of Christ does not, as the Roman Catholics teach, require us to stifle, or crush out, our natural affection for the friends whom God has given us. It purifies and ennobles these human feelings. The kindly exercise of these social affections is intended, by our loving Father, to keep the better sympathies of our nature open and active, in spite of the wintry atmosphere of selfishness in which we live. It is the attempt to satisfy the spiritual in our nature with what is earthly that is condemned—the chaining down to what is temporary and perishable the powers and affections of an immortal nature. It is not loving what is bright and beautiful that is wrong. It is the way we love these things that makes it

displeasing to God and hurtful to the soul. A man may justly labor hard to get wealth without incurring blame. It is the enslaving love of wealth, for its own sake, that degrades him. A Christian may legitimately find pleasure in the gifts of God's earthly bounty. It is the unlawful gratification of a desire for pleasure that is wrong; or the inordinate love of earthly pleasure, that is shown "when the heart, that was made large enough for God, wastes itself upon the world."

The world, in the New Testament, commonly implies the people of this world in their guilty and depraved condition, with all those sinful dispositions and practices which characterize them in their alienation from God—all that is in the world contrary to God's will and law. In this sense St. Paul uses it, when he says: "Who gave Himself for our sins, that He might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God and our Father." It is in this sense the term is used in all those places in Scripture, where the world is spoken of with aversion and condemnation, as "the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eye, and the pride of life." All that tends to darken the light of conscience, and lead the soul away from the Fountain of life, by whatever name these things may be called, must be classed

with this "evil world," against which the Bible so solemnly warns us.

It is easy to understand the attitude which the children of God should sustain to the children of the world, from what is said respecting each class in the Word of God. The world is represented as ignorant and blind ; alienated from God and hostile to truth and holiness ; under the curse of the Divine law, and wearing the chains of a debasing slavery. The Christian in the world was once a guilty offender, but has been freely and graciously forgiven ; and therefore owes undying gratitude to his great Forgiver. Once he was a slave, but his chains have been broken, and he is now God's freedman, rejoicing in his liberty. He is a soldier who has sworn allegiance to the Captain of his salvation, and promised to be faithful unto death. He is a witness, appointed by God Himself to make known the unsearchable riches of Christ, of which he has been made a partaker, to those who are perishing and destitute. He is a light to guide the faltering wanderers of earth through the pitfalls of error into the path of life. He is a pilgrim and a stranger, conscious that all by which he is surrounded and attracted here is fading and transitory ; but knowing that he is heir to an immortal inheritance—"a city that hath foundations, whose Founder

and Builder is God." There is evidently a great gulf between these two classes. Union and friendship are impossible; unless one or other undergoes a great change. Fraternal communion between them is rendered still more improbable, from the fact that the Christian has passed over from the world. He knows all about its want and wretchedness. He has rejected its unsatisfying delights. He knows they cannot satisfy the hunger of the soul. He has "tasted the good Word of God, and the powers of the world to come." He has drunk of the water of life, and knows the peace that comes by faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. Yet, conformity to the world implies the adoption, in some degree, by the Christian, of the spirit and practices of those who are living in alienation from God. And such conformity, alas! is not only a fact; it is painfully and extensively common in a great variety of forms. Let us briefly notice some of the prevailing forms of conformity to the world.

II.

Christians conform to the world *when they adopt the low standards of right and wrong which prevail among ungodly men.* In every community there exists a conventional standard of morality—a counterfeit of every virtue. Men, in whose hearts the

law of love is not enthroned, count themselves honest so long as they do not actually violate the law of property, no matter how contrary to its spirit they may act. They claim to be veracious, so long as they do not verbally state what they know to be false. They claim to be right, so long as they avoid a direct collision with the social prohibitions of immorality, which are accepted as rules of life. When interest or passion prompts, they go as close to the verge of transgression as the letter of the law will permit. But the law of Christian duty, as expounded in the New Testament, is much higher and broader than this. It condemns the wrong thought. It prohibits the selfish spirit which gives birth to the selfish act. He that hateth his brother is a murderer. The impure and lustful thought is adultery. Misleading silence is falsehood. Thinking our own foolish thoughts, or speaking our own selfish words, on God's holy day, is a violation of the Sabbath. Giving to earthly and temporal things such a degree of thought and affection as interferes with God's claims on our trust and love is idolatry. The quickened conscience of the renewed nature feels everything to be sin that violates this "exceeding broad" commandment.

The true Christian no longer refrains from sin for fear of the penalty of the law. He is not only free

from the law as the instrument of his justification, he is also free from it as the chief motive to obedience. His whole life has come under the higher law of love. His obedience is prompted by loving gratitude. He feels that, even if there was no obligation to obey the Divine law, he would obey just the same. "For His commandments are not grievous." "The law of the Spirit of life which is in Christ Jesus hath made him free from the law of sin and death." He "runs with delight in the way of God's commandments," because his "heart is enlarged." In his intercourse with others, the golden rule is his law; and his question in all cases is, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" What has such an one to do with the adroit quirks and special pleadings, by which worldly men endeavor to prove their evil to be good? He should never occupy a position, or be guilty of an act, that would require the use of this logic of selfishness to defend it. Whenever, therefore, a Christian is found applying these mutilated standards to his own conduct, or attempting to justify himself in some doubtful course, by a narrowly literal and extreme interpretation of duty, it is a sign of conformity to the world, which should awaken his suspicions respecting himself. As such strained attempts at exculpation of questionable conduct will

not fail to arouse the suspicions of others, that he is not moving in the high plane of Christian principle. For even worldlings, who practise these methods of excusing their own meanness, know how to estimate the character of Christians who stoop to the same tactics. These low counterfeit standards of morality, though they may be popular enough among those whose lives are not governed by principle, are never appealed to by Christians, except to secure some questionable indulgence, or palliate some selfish action, which even their own partial consciences condemn.

III.

Another form of this sin is, when the chief happiness of life is sought in worldly friendships and amusements. Man is a social being, made for companionship and friendship. There is in human nature a capacity of responsive sympathy which makes us easily share the feelings, appropriate the thoughts, or become attuned to the spirit of those with whom we hold intimate social intercourse. The friendships of life must be ranked among the most precious gifts, with which our Father in heaven brightens the darkness and softens the sorrows of earth. By all refined minds, friendship is more highly prized than gold. True friendship is a holy

light to irradiate the gloomiest paths of trial and disappointment. It is a living spring in the desert of life, from which many a toil-worn and fainting pilgrim has drunk refreshing draughts of hope and consolation. How much more dreary and desolate this world would be, if its chilling gloom were not tempered and brightened by friendship? It lightens every burden and assuages every pain. In the Christian life it plays no minor part. The vastly greater importance of the interests of the spiritual life invests with a correspondingly higher significance the friendships that affect them for evil or for good. By a law of influence, to which there is no exception, the friendships of life either elevate or degrade us. They either help or hinder the Christian in his pilgrimage to the celestial city above.

The choice of irreligious persons, as companions and friends, is one of the most seductive and dangerous forms of conformity to the world. I do not mean that religious people are to have absolutely no intercourse with ungodly people; for, as St. Paul says: "then must they needs go out of the world." Nor are they to shut themselves in seclusion from general society and all the temptations of the world. There is no scriptural warrant for such a course. If Christians are to let their light shine before uncon-

verted men, they must, to some extent, come into contact with them. It is evidently God's purpose, that the warmth of Christian love and faith should touch and melt the icy coldness of the world's unbelief. St. Paul, in writing to the Corinthians, does not condemn necessary intercourse with the unbelieving world ; but he requires them not to keep company, or even to eat with those who called themselves by the name of Christ, and yet lived in sensuality and wickedness. It was the complaint of Pharisaic formalists against Christ : " This man receiveth sinners and eateth with them." If our Divine Master mingled with common sinners in the poorer classes of society, it will not become His modern followers to stand aloof from the same class, in such a way as to make the impression that they look down upon them from their high moral position with spiritual disdain ; saying by deed, if not by word, " stand by, I am holier than thou." Every person has the right to choose who his intimate friends shall be, and to exclude from that inner circle those of whom he disapproves. But there is scarcely any Christian but must, without his own choice, have some degree of intercourse and acquaintanceship with irreligious people. All such association should be marked by kindness and courtesy.

It is no part of a Christian's duty to make himself disagreeable to the irreligious people with whom he comes in contact.

But acting courteously with the irreligious people whom we meet in the ordinary relations of life, or seeking intercourse with them for the purpose of doing them good, is a widely different thing from deliberately choosing ungodly persons as our intimate companions and confidential friends. Such a choice by any Christian is inconsistent, unsafe, and injurious in its influence. It is dishonoring to the God we profess to love and serve, to select as the companions with whom we hold our most frank and pleasant communion, those who are living in the violation of His holy law, using their powers to oppose the accomplishment of His purposes in the world. No man would choose for his intimate associates those who daily insulted and slandered his dearest earthly friends. He might exercise the spirit of forgiveness towards such persons; but he could not but feel indignation and just aversion, that would prevent him receiving them as friendly companions. Is a believer in Christ under less obligation to resent and condemn insults offered to his Master's name, than those offered to an earthly friend? Can a man, who really loves and honors God, choose His enemies for his

friends? Friendship implies mutual esteem and confidence. How can this exist between the loyal soldier and the rebel, without treachery on the part of the former?

Those cautions of Scripture, which warn us against companionship with the enemies of the Cross of Christ, are based upon a wise regard to that peculiarity of our nature, which renders us susceptible of being contaminated by the sinful follies of those with whom we consort. Sin is a contagious disease. "Evil communications corrupt good manners." Christians cannot, without serious risk to their souls' health, drink in the spirit of unbelief and ungodliness that breathes through the conversation of those whose hearts are still at enmity with God. As the body is liable to catch certain infectious fevers from those who are suffering from them, so the soul is liable to become infected by the sinful thoughts and words of those with whom we associate. The more intimate and confidential that fellowship is, the greater the peril it involves. In all periods of the history of the Church, thousands of her members have suffered serious spiritual loss by cultivating the friendship of the world. A Christian cannot listen to frequent expressions of unbelief and impiety, without having the sensitiveness of his conscience to

the first approaches of sin blunted, and the whole tone of his moral nature lowered. If, by circumstances beyond our control, we are thrown into contact with the ungodly, we have a right to expect a degree of Divine help in resisting their influence, that we have no warrant to rely upon when we are exposed to such danger by our own deliberate choice.

For a Christian to choose the irreligious for social companions, directly tends to strengthen them in their neglect of religion and doubts of its reality; while the effect upon unconverted persons, who witness such fellowship, can only be to confirm them in their low estimate of the value of religion. "For what can men think when they see Christians cultivating the friendship of unbelievers, but that it is immaterial whether a man is a Christian or not; that Christianity itself is consequently unimportant; and that sin cannot be the base and unnatural thing which the Bible declares it to be? When God pronounces a curse on a certain mode of life, and yet we think that a man who lives in it is fit for our chosen companionship, does it not come to this, that we give the lie to God, and hold His blessing and His curse as of no consequence."*

* Rev. E. Garbutt.

a mark of the child of God, that "in his eyes a vile person is contemned; but he honoreth them that fear the Lord."

In such cases, the natural conclusion of men who are anxious to find in the conduct of others some pretext for their own indifference, will be that religion is an unreal thing, and those who profess it hypocrites. Dr. Boyd of Edinburgh, thus forcibly presents the same argument: "But what we now maintain is this, that if any believer courts and delights in the society of those who are not Christians—no matter how pleasant and elegant and intellectual that society may be—that believer is incurring the guilt which Jerusalem incurred, when Jerusalem made itself 'a comfort to Sodom.' That believer is following a course which directly tends to encourage the unbeliever to go on in his evil ways. For what is the natural reasoning of any man who is not a Christian, when he finds a man who is a Christian ever ready to make him a companion and a friend? 'How can he think,' the unbeliever will judge, 'how can he think that I am going to hell! Is it possible that he should like to be the companion of my walks,—to interchange thought and feeling with me,—to discuss great questions with me,—perhaps often to jest and laugh with me;—and all

the while believe and know, that as sure as there is a God above us, I am going down to hell !' "

IV.

All this applies, with still greater point and force, to the practice of Christians seeking their happiness in the dissipating amusements and frivolities of those who "mind earthly things," and are utterly neglecting God's claims upon them. God has made us with a deep hunger for happiness in our nature. It is instinctive and universal among all human beings. Doubtless it is designed to lead us to the Supreme Fountain of joy. As the tendrils, by taking hold of the oak, are lifted up into the warmth of the sun, so the affections and aspirations of our souls are designed to take hold of God, that we may be thereby lifted heavenward. The great distinction between a Christian and a worldling is, that the one seeks his happiness in the things of this world, the other finds his supreme happiness in God.

All must admit that some kind of recreation and amusement is allowable and necessary. The toiling brain and hand both require the rest that comes from change of employment. Christianity does not require us to be misanthropic hermits, refusing to rejoice in the tokens of the Divine goodness. It is

no sin to be merry and light-hearted. The fact that we are made capable of social enjoyment shows that it is the Divine intention that this feeling should find its legitimate gratification. The work of life is not to be one unbroken, joyless slavery. Our nature requires play as well as work. But the question that presses for solution is, what amusements are innocent and proper? What amusements are inconsistent with Christianity, and therefore to be avoided and prohibited? These questions are difficult to answer with regard to practical details. It is easy to state general principles, respecting which all will agree; but when we come to draw a rigid line as to the particular recreations that are right or wrong, even good Christians will differ. Some defend as innocent things that others condemn as questionable and sinful. It would be impossible to lay down any precise set of directions on this subject which would secure general acceptance. In these things much depends upon the spirit and motive. It would be both unwise and useless to attempt anything more than the enunciation of governing principles, leaving their application to each individual Christian conscience. Mere physical exercise has no moral character, apart from the motive and spirit that prompt it, or its interference with obligatory duties.

It is the disposition which any form of amusement excites, the kind of companionship into which it brings us, the moral tendency and drift of the whole, that must determine whether it is safe and innocent, or otherwise. All amusements that lower the moral tone of our thoughts and feeling, that render us less fit for the discharge of the great duties of life, that are injurious to health, that tend to excite unholy desires, that create or strengthen an appetite for things unlawful and hurtful, or that are inconsistent with the character and duty of a Christian, must be renounced as wrong.

I say nothing, in this connection, of the theatre; because its tendency to mislead and corrupt is so generally acknowledged among Christian people, that it may safely be assumed, few readers of this volume will need to be cautioned against its insidious attractions. But, tried by the test I have suggested, I do not think that attendance at balls and convivial parties, where the whole tone of feeling is frivolous, earthly, and hostile to scriptural godliness, can be justly ranked among things in harmony with religious character, which may be safely indulged in by true Christians. Many nominal Christians may regard this judgment as narrow and puritanical, and plead for a more liberal interpretation of Christian duty.

Especially in the case of the young, it is accounted unreasonable to deprive them of such enjoyments of life as are common among those of their own age. I have a strong admiration for a liberal and joyous type of religion. Narrowness and asceticism are not Christianity. But all thoughtful observers of human life know that it is not those who pursue pleasure most eagerly, among scenes of gaiety and amusement, who secure the highest degree of happiness. The religion of Christ denies us nothing that would really conduce to increase our happiness. All that is prohibited are things which, in the end, would lessen our enjoyment. From a Christian stand-point there are unanswerable reasons why those, who stand forth as God's witnesses in the world, should not seek their pleasure in such scenes and associations. We cannot enjoy the incompatible pleasure of carnal delight and holy, spiritual joy.

It does not follow, because all that occurs in these places of worldly amusement may be consistent with the proprieties of good society, and unmarred by any acts of flagrant wickedness, that they are proper places for Christian men and women who are living for eternity. The ruin of souls may be successfully accomplished without the intervention of temptations to gross sin. Anything that so absorbs the thought

and affection of the heart, as to lead the soul away from God, may be the cause of the soul's perdition. In these places of worldly dissipation, there may be none of the surfeiting and drunkenness, against which Christ warns His disciples. The profane oath and blasphemous expression may not pollute the air. There may be no sentiments of atheistic unbelief uttered there. There may be no palpable violations of any Divine law. Nothing that would shock the refined sensibilities. And yet there may be a poisoned moral atmosphere there, sapping the soul's life. There may be an utterly earthly and carnal spirit, darkening the light of heaven within the conscience. A siren music, cradling the soul into forgetfulness of its spiritual interests and immortal destiny. Is it consistent, wise, or safe, for the children of God willingly to forsake the tabernacles of the Most High, to dwell for a season in these tents of wickedness?

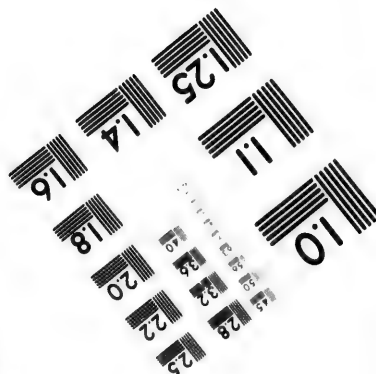
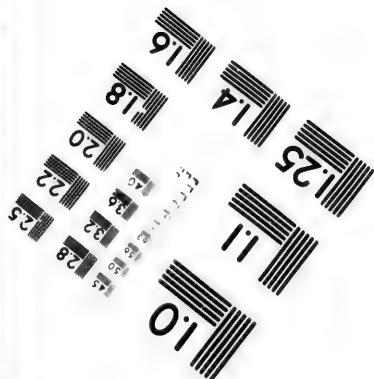
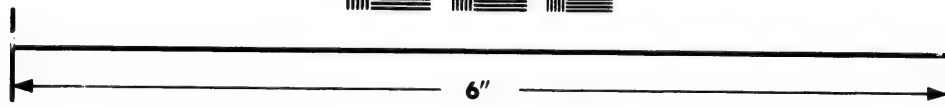
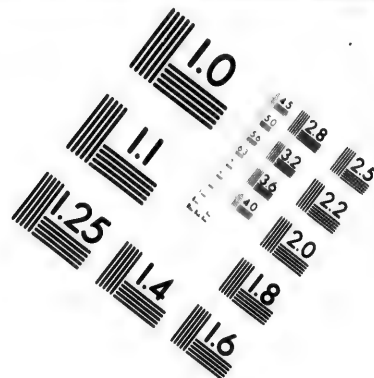
The prophet Ezekiel denounces God's judgments against Israel, for being a comfort to the daughters of Samaria and Sodom, in their idolatrous forgetfulness of God. They were confirmed in their sinful practices by seeing the children of Israel, who claimed to be God's chosen people, do the same wicked things as themselves. And in what way can

Christian people more directly comfort and confirm the children of this world, in their guilty forgetfulness of God, than by joining them in those amusements and follies of earth with which they vainly try to satisfy the thirst for happiness which only God can fully allay? Will it not create in the minds of such worldly associates the conviction, that there can be nothing really inconsistent with religion in the selfish pursuits of their worldly and godless lives, if those who stand before the world as members of the Christian Church, and representatives of the power of religion, can join in them with evident approval and satisfaction? Or else, struck with the inconsistency of such Christians, they may silence their compunctions by more deadly unbelief. Can it be justly accounted a small thing, for those who profess to love Christ, to pursue any course that conduces to such a result? Well does a living writer say: "And just as blessed and happy a thing as it is to bring another soul to the belief of the Gospel,—so wretched, and wicked, and fearful a thing is it, when one who bears the Christian name, lives in such a way as positively encourages those around him to continue and disbelieve Christianity."—(Rev. Dr. Boyd.)

If Christians would only bear in mind that every deed of their lives stamps its imperishable signature

upon the character of the immortal beings around them—that they wake not an echo but vibrates to eternity—that their unfaithfulness may ruin the souls of persons whom they have never known by name, they would avoid all doubtful ground, and carefully watch that no act or word of theirs should be such as to hinder sinners in coming to Christ, or strengthen their unbelief. A man who bore the reputation of a Christian in his own neighborhood, being in a distant city, went to a theatre, thinking the act would never be known. Some years after, he was sent for to visit a dying man, who, when he saw him, charged him with the ruin of his soul. While young, he had seen this professing Christian enter the theatre, and followed his example ; saying to himself, that if a Church member and Sunday School Superintendent could do this, he could. He had become hardened in sin, and now lay helpless in death ; but felt that the crisis of his life was when he followed that fatal example.

Not only is this desire for worldly enjoyments on the part of Christians hurtful to their own spiritual life and injurious to those who witness it ; it is a sign that the heart is not right with God ; an alarming symptom of spiritual deadness ; a confession that they do not find satisfying enjoyment in



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religion; that it needs to be supplemented by frivolous mirth and sensual pleasures. As Dr. Chalmers eloquently says: "For a man to delight in the air and conversation of an irreligious party, bears on it the evidence of his own irreligion. It proves him to be of a kindred quality with those who have nothing in them akin to sacredness. And the very facility wherewith his spirit can amalgamate with theirs—the very comfort and pleasure wherewith he can breathe in an atmosphere altogether tainted with ungodliness—the very circumstance of him not feeling out of his element, though in an element in which, for hours together, there has not been one sentiment exchanged that bears on the things of faith or of eternity—this ought to alarm him for his own state, as carrying in it the indication of its being a state in which nature still maintains great force, if it do not maintain the entire predominancy. And, if it be the apostolic symptom of having passed from death unto life, that we love the brethren, or love the society of Christian disciples—then may the love of another society, at utter antipodes with the former, administer the suspicion of a still unregenerated heart, of still unsubdued worldliness."

Even those who appear to want the liberty of bringing the Church as near to the world as possible,

without making them actually one, will confess that the worldly amusements for which they plead, are not congruous with the highest type of personal godliness. Let those who plead for the unholy frivolity of the dancing-party, and the pleasurable excitement of the wine-cup, picture to themselves their highest ideal of a holy Christian—one whose conversation is in heaven, who lives a life of faith and prayer, whose heart is deeply moved with sympathy for perishing sinners, who has such an apprehension of the grandeur and worth of heavenly things, that he lives under “the powers of the world to come”—and they cannot, even in imagination, think of such a one frequenting and enjoying those scenes of worldly dissipation, of which we have been speaking, without the thought jarring them with a feeling of utter discordancy? The very thought of Paul, or Peter—or even Baxter, Rutherford, Wesley, or Payson—attending such scenes and engaging in such amusements, seems as irreverent as it is incongruous and grotesque. Such a course would be utterly out of keeping with the known character of these godly men. And yet, the more godly a man is, the more likely is he to be uninjured by these things. If a man’s religious character is not fully established, he is in greater danger of being misled by evil

associations. What is wrong and inconsistent for one Christian is the same for all. Christianity has not two standards of duty for its disciples. To assume that if we live in a very low plane of religious experience, we may innocently do things that, if we were better Christians we dare not do, is wholly unwarranted. To all believers the apostolic admonition is given :—" Ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord ; walk as children of light ; and have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them."

All the pretexts and excuses that are offered by lukewarm Christians, in justification of these questionable indulgencies, are only apologies for foregone conclusions ; and not the real causes of their conduct. The true reason is that the merely nominal, conventional kind of religion which they have does not yield any satisfying peace with God and joy in the Holy Ghost ; and, consequently, they are trying to fill the great void in the heart with the world—trying to slake the burning thirst of the soul with draughts from the turbid streams of earth which, like the ocean brine that the shipwrecked mariner drinks, only intensify the thirst they promise to assuage. It would be absurd to deny that there is a degree of pleasure and gratification in these worldly amuse-

ments. If there were not, they would not possess such attraction for the young. There is a momentary satisfaction to a part of the nature. But all these sources of pleasure are exhausted by frequent indulgence till they lose their power to please. Happiness flies from all who seek her in a selfish spirit; and makes her home only with those who, forgetting their own gratification, labor faithfully for the happiness of others. All pleasures of sense have a sensual destiny. They soon decay and perish. But there is satisfying and lasting pleasure to be found in the devout study of the works and words of the Creator; in the joy of benevolent efforts for the well-being of our fellowmen; and in the communion of the trusting soul with God. These pleasures satisfy the highest part of our nature. They are not diminished by enjoyment; but are capable of indefinite increase. "The path of the just is as the shining light, which shineth more and more unto the perfect day." Christ is the believer's satisfying portion.

"As by the light of opening day,
The stars are all concealed,
So earthly pleasures fade away,
When Jesus is revealed."

One of the most striking and suggestive of the creations of Bunyan's imagination is the picture of

the man with the muckrake, bent down scraping in the dust for worthless refuse, while an angel above him offers him a golden crown, which he does not even look at. This angel might fitly represent the Bible. It is largely occupied with lessons of truth designed to teach men that their true interests and destinies are grander and more enduring than anything which is limited merely to this earthly existence. In various ways we are taught that the faculties and capacities, sufferings and enjoyments, of the spiritual in man, vastly transcend in importance those that are carnal and material. They relate to our higher and nobler nature. They constitute our deeper, truer selfhood. They are the permanent and imperishable characteristics of our being. They are the points of contact with the Divine nature through which we receive God's moral likeness, and become capable of fulfilling the great purpose of our existence. As the husk to the kernel, and the chaff to the wheat—as the scaffolding to the permanent structure, or the temporary means to the enduring result, so is all that relates to physical well-being, to those things which affect the interests of our intellectual and immortal being.

It is because the body entemples the godlike soul, of which it is the instrument and servant, that

its welfare demands special regard. Paul declares that our bodies are the temples of the Holy Ghost ; and urges this as a reason why we should glorify God in our bodies and souls which are His. In severe bodily suffering and persecution, he rejoices that "though the outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day." And, contemplating the dissolution of the body, he exclaims : "For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." The same line of thought is presented by St. John : "And the world passeth away and the lust thereof ; but he that doeth the will of God abideth forever." That which is transient and decaying cannot supply the wants of the imperishable spirit. The same contrast between the unsatisfying pleasures of sin and the true bread of life, which God gives His people, is presented by Isaiah : "Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread ? and your labor for that which satisfieth not ? Hearken diligently unto Me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness." The New Testament idea of a Christian is one whose eyes are anointed with Divine illumination, to discern the true relative value of earthly and heavenly things. One

whose affections are "set upon things above, and not on things on the earth." One whose whole life has come under the sway of principles and motives higher and holier than those which govern the men of this world. Like Moses, "he endures as seeing Him that is invisible." Some of the saints in olden times used to speak much of the "Beatific Vision" of God. That is the sight which makes a man completely blessed—to see with the eye of the soul, though it might be but for a moment, a true conception of God, which made this world forever after seem as nothing to them. Well, the Christian is one who, in a significant sense, has caught such glimpses of the glory and blessedness of holiness on earth, and of the rest and joy of heaven, as have deprived the things of earth of their power to charm and enslave him :

"And lifted his soul from the songs of earth
To music of higher and holier birth,
Turning the tide of his yearning love
To the beautiful things that are found above."

This higher life of faith in the Son of God, and joy in the Holy Ghost, receives a fine illustration in the self-denying heroism of St. Paul, who in the face of danger and death says : " But none of these things

move me ; neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I may finish my course with joy, and the ministry which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the Gospel of the grace of God."

V.

Ethnologists distinguish the different races of men from each other, by certain clearly defined characteristics. These physical distinctions of race are not more strongly marked, than are the features of mental character by which the Bible designates the Church and the world. Unbelief of the truth, selfishness, ignorant misconceptions of the Divine character, want of love for God, and the regarding earthly interests as supreme, are constantly mentioned as the signs of worldliness. The main design of salvation is to deliver sinful men from the depraved moral state, that causes these forms of sin to disfigure the life. When, therefore, Christians, in their daily life, present the same moral characteristics, by which the word of God designates the world, it is an alarming proof, either that they have been "entangled again with the yoke of bondage," or else that they have never been delivered from it. It is a sign of desertion. Such Christians have made peace with the enemy, against whom they were

pledged to fight. They who went forth to conquer have themselves been vanquished.

One of the most conspicuous of these characteristics of the children of this world is that they "mind earthly things." They prefer the fading flowers of earthly glory to the undying amaranths of heaven. The preaching of the Cross, which displays Divine wisdom and love, and is, to all who believe, the power of God unto salvation, is foolishness unto them. They hate the light of truth, because it makes manifest the vanity of their delusive dreams. They are the slaves of the visible and temporal, living without God in the world. When, therefore, we see Christians, who profess to be governed by a higher law, acting in the same spirit, they are justly chargeable with the sin of conformity to the world.

Making the acquisition of wealth the central pivot, around which all the decisions of the life are made to turn, is one of the most common and baneful forms of inconsistency among Christians. It would be wrong to condemn industry exerted for the acquisition of wealth. Christians are admonished to labour with their hands, "that they may have to give to him that needeth." It would be foolish to unduly disparage wealth. It is an element of power, and may be used in such a way as to glorify God,

and promote the well-being of our fellow-creatures. It is not money, but the inordinate love of it, that is "the root of all evil." A man's being rich or poor does not tell what manner of man he is. The rich may be humble and kind; the poor may be proud and censorious. But, assuredly, there are things more precious than money. Life has nobler aims than the acquisition of wealth. And when we see one, who stands before the world as a child of God and an heir of immortality, adopting a course of action which plainly evinces that the earthly and perishing interests of time are more potent motives of conduct than those which relate to the spiritual and immortal, all our sense of consistency is shocked. We feel that it ought not so to be.

Yet, how often Christian parents, in choosing professions or positions for their children in life, appear to drop out of sight the consideration of their religious welfare, as if it were not worthy of a thought. Like Lot, who chose the well-watered plain of Sodom, notwithstanding the gross wickedness of its people, they are willing to expose their children to the greatest religious risk, if they can only have some ground to hope that they will acquire wealth and social distinction. This is often painfully illustrated in relation to marriage connections.

Parents will accept a wealthy and godless man, as a husband for their daughter, making character and piety quite secondary to money and social position. In such cases, we cannot resist the conclusion, whatever may be their professions of faith and piety, that those who do such things are recreant to the principles of Christianity, and are making a low worldly expediency the rule of their life.

The same spirit is seen in the cringing homage paid by nominal Christians to wealthy people. A man has a right to a degree of credit and honor for succeeding in any legitimate business. But, when Christian people give special honor and respect to men, simply on account of their money, and without regard to moral worth—when they make wealth the standard of respectability, and offer a smiling and servile homage to the rich bad man, while they render but scant courtesy to the high-principled poor man, do they not plainly declare that they hold wealth and social rank to be matters of greater worth than piety and manhood? Such things are not rare in the churches. A man who has the reputation of being wealthy seldom wants friends. His opinions are generally accepted as orthodox, and his deeds applauded. In how many instances have successful swindlers and dishonest knaves received the respect-

ful homage of Christian people, who had not the moral manhood to scorn their unrighteous knavery !

This prevailing disposition to make wealth the standard of worth, and to regard the acquisition of money as the great object of life, is the chief cause of those examples of commercial dishonesty and treachery on the part of professing Christians, which have brought so much reproach upon religion, and weakened and injured the influence of the Church in the world, by giving unbelievers a plausible pretext for the charge, that Christians were as weak and selfish as other men. O ! it needs some prophet's voice—some John the Baptist's fearless courage—to ring out, above the din of the Mammon worship that disgraces our times, the great truth that “a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things that he possesseth ;” that “God hath chosen the poor of this world rich in faith, and heirs of the Kingdom which He hath promised to them that love Him.”

Whatever may be said of the legitimacy of industry and enterprise, and of the value of wealth as a means of securing desirable ends, it should never be forgotten that, when the secular and spiritual interests come into collision, there must be no hesitation. If we act on Christian principle we must

surrender the earthly. If any scheme is such that we cannot pursue it without sacrificing our religious principles, we must at all hazards maintain our principles. "No man can serve two masters. Ye cannot serve God and Mammon." There are, it is to be feared, a great many in all our churches trying to do what many in all ages have tried in vain. They are endeavoring to unite the service of God and that of the world. Endeavoring to enjoy the advantages of being Christians and the pleasures and honors of the world at the same time. But these two are utterly incompatible. "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him." "And whosoever doth not bear His cross, and come after Me, cannot be My disciple." No matter what the sacrifice involved may be, it must be made. "If thy right hand offend thee, cut it off and cast it from thee."

This conformity to the spirit, views, and practices of the world, is the great sin of the Church of to-day. Though it has its deep invisible spring in "the evil heart of unbelief," prone to depart from the living God—yet, there are several circumstances and characteristics of the times which greatly strengthen this tendency. The world, with which we have to do, is

half christianized. It has accepted as much of Christianity as it could adopt without renouncing its idols. Like the ancient Romans, it places the God of the Bible among its own gods. It no longer takes up an attitude of open hostility to the Church. Persecution separates the Church from the world; but in times of prosperity there is a tendency to friendship and amalgamation.

The nations, in which Christianity occupies the most prominent place among the moulding forces of social and personal life, are those in which the useful arts have been most successful in promoting the growth of wealth. It is well known, from the past history of nations, that the accumulation of wealth promotes luxury and slothful self-indulgence. Nations that in times of comparative poverty, when the hardy, self-denying virtues were common, swayed the sceptre of imperial power over vast regions, became enervated by the vices of luxury, till the sceptre dropped from the nerveless grasp of those who were living on the memory of what their ancestors had done.

The Christian nations of the world are now passing through a similar ordeal. In many instances the symptoms that heralded the decline of ancient Rome are appearing in our own times. The experi-

ment is being tried, whether the conserving salt of Christianity can save the wealthy nations of Christendom from moral putrefaction. What is true of nations is equally true of individuals. Wealth has its besetting sins as well as poverty. The wealthy Christian is strongly tempted to use his money in the same selfish way as others; and to imitate all the fashionable follies of his wealthy, unbelieving neighbors. The habitual intercourse of persons of similar wealth and social standing tends to reduce them to the same level of character. The desire of some parents to secure genteel and wealthy society for their children induces them to run a large degree of religious risk for this object.

The prevailing skepticism of the day is loosening the restraints which a more dogmatic faith imposed. As at the time of the Protestant Reformation, the newly-awakened anti-papal zeal of the people prompted them to destroy paintings and statuary that were eminently worthy of preservation, so at the present time, in the liberal reaction against that narrow and ascetic type of Christianity, which puts a veto on the innocent indulgence of natural feelings and all cheerful enjoyment, there is danger that some precious things may be ranked among the old foggy notions that are devoted to destruction. Well meant

liberality may degenerate into licentiousness. There are many who sneer at Christian stringency, to whom may fitly be applied the words of Peter: "While they promise them liberty, they themselves are the servants of corruption."

In Holland much land has been reclaimed from the sea, and is protected by dykes. Sometimes a break in one of these lets in a destructive flood, which renders many homes desolate. So worldly conformity breaks down the dykes which separate the Church from the world; and lets in the overflowing waves of ungodliness, to destroy the fairest fields that have been redeemed from the great sea of sin. Everywhere this conformity to the world is stealing the nerve from the arm and the fire from the heart. It is a secret, deadly malady, preying upon the Church, and undermining its influence for good. It opens the gates to the enemy. It effaces the line of distinction between the Church and the world, and lowers the standard of zeal and liberality. Where this sin prevails, Christ's people are no longer a peculiar people. The power to lift up the world heavenward is lost when Christians go down to the world's level. It is an utter mistake to dream that men can be won from sin to holiness, by the representatives of religion pandering to their frivolous

tastes and false notions of spiritual things "Be not deceived; God is not mocked; for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh, shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit, shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting."

Is there no idol shrined within thy spirit,
Where God alone should reign?
No love of wrong, which gives thee to inherit
A legacy of pain?

Are there no works of faith and love neglected,
To thee by Heaven assigned?
No daily Rimmon-worship, undetected,
Blighting thy peace of mind?

Arise and search thy heart—let nothing stay thee—
The fatal fault is there—
This traitor in thy soul may else betray thee
To ruin and despair.

Nor doubt, when thou with heart contrite and lowly
Hast all thy sins confest,
Thy night shall pass away, and God the holy
Shall hear and give thee rest.

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IV.

Want of Harmony between the Creed and
the Life.

Before thou reprehend another, take heed that thou art not culpable in what thou goest about to reprehend. He that cleanses a blot with blurred fingers will make a greater blot. Even the candle snuffers of the sanctuary were made of pure gold.

QUARLES.

Too many have no idea of the subjection of their temper to the influence of religion ; and yet, what is changed if the temper is not ? If a man is as passionate, malicious, resentful, sullen, morose, and moody, after his conversion as before it, what is he converted from or to ?

JOHN ANGEL JAMES.

Let not selfish passion blind thee,
Wrong to act, or false to speak—
Know, whatever fate betide thee,
Truth is strong and falsehood weak.
Still, the eyes of God the holy
Every thought and deed behold,
And a pure and peaceful conscience
Never can be bought with gold.

SONGS OF LIFF.



CHAPTER IV.

THE WANT OF HARMONY BETWEEN THE LIFE AND THE CREED.

I.

SINCE the example and character of professing believers in Christ are so powerful for good, when they worthily represent the excellency of Christianity, and so hurtful and damaging to Christian influence, when they bear false witness against religion, it may be a step towards correcting the evils complained of, to point out some of the most palpable defects and inconsistencies which prevail among those who are called by the Christian name. It is a painful fact, that the ordinary Christian whom we meet in the world is not the ideal Christian of the Bible. It will hardly be denied that a great deal takes place among the members of Christian

churches, which is calculated to make the impression upon the minds of unbelievers, who ordinarily have strong prejudices against religion and religious people, that Christians are no better than those who make no profession of religion at all. Such a judgment, whether it be true or false, not only deprives the Christians whose conduct prompts this opinion of power to influence those who cherish such thoughts respecting them; it also does an unjust injury to faithful and consistent Christians, by causing them to be classed in the same category. When one Christian is faithless to his principles, it is too often assumed that all others are equally unprincipled. Christians must expect to be tested by their own high standards of duty. Yet, in many cases, it seems as if a profession of faith in Christ, and membership in a Christian church, are regarded as a guaranty of safety—a sort of moral lightning rod that can ward off the bolts of condemnation, to which common sinners who do similar things are exposed. What would be wrong in one who makes no profession of religion, cannot be right in a member of a Christian church. A public profession of faith in Christ should make the believer feel a deeper sense of his obligation to witness a good confession before men. The godly examples of our spiritual

ancestors may inspire us to "be followers of those who through faith and patience inherit the promises"; but their faith cannot save us. "A name to live," or fellowship with the Church, cannot supply the lack of personal godliness. Neither can any past experience, or former work done, be sufficient for the soul's present need. What can former professions of faith do for you? They cannot yield strength for the daily temptations and burdens of life. They cannot convince the gainsayers, or illustrate the sufficiency of Divine grace. They cannot yield consolation for present sufferings and disappointments. And, especially, they cannot cancel your obligations, to "show forth the praises of Him who hath called you out of darkness into His marvellous light." As the helm, that is not powerful enough to control the course of the ship, cannot prevent her drifting upon the rocks, so the faith that does not determine the course of the life is a fruitless faith, that cannot save the soul from death.

II.

A common and culpable form of inconsistency, between the creed and the practice of life, is recreancy to strict integrity and truthfulness in the transactions of secular business. The most powerful

pleadings of self-interest can never palliate dishonesty or falsehood, on the part of a Christian. It is only when men do right, in spite of strong temptations to swerve from the standards of righteousness, that their deeds become significant tokens of character. It is easy to present the semblance of faith and religious feeling, where men are surrounded by an atmosphere of religious belief and devotion, and there is little or no temptation to any wrong course. The most unskilful captain of the most unseaworthy ship may make progress, with a fair wind and a smooth sea. It is the adverse winds and the rough sea, which test the strength of the vessel and the seamanship of the mariner. As John Milton says: "I cannot praise a fugitive and cloistered virtue, unexercised and unbreathed, that never sallies out and sees her adversary, but slinks out of the race where that immortal garland is to be run for, not without dust and heat." As we live in a secular and sinful world, a religion that cannot stand the strain of such a world, and nerve us to resist its temptations, is not suited to our need. We want a piety that will enable those who possess it to be honest, and pure, and brave, amid strong temptations to dishonesty, impurity, and moral cowardice.

The widespread disposition to regard religion and

secular business as belonging to two distinct departments of life, is a misleading error, based upon false ideas as to what religion is. It helps to create that dangerous notion, that faithlessness to Christian principle, at one time, may be atoned for by the devotion and pious sentiments of some other time. By many the Sabbath is regarded as a day on which one can be so godly and devout, that he can afford to put God almost wholly out of his thoughts for the rest of the week. The world and its business are looked upon as unholy things, which cannot be touched without pollution. Religion is regarded as something consisting of prayers and other religious exercises. It may be very good in sorrow and sickness; but it is a matter belonging to the services of the house of worship, quite too sacred to be brought into contact with the rough struggles of common life.

It is easy to see that those who entertain the idea that religion is something separate from the daily secular concerns of life, are very much in danger of not bringing the great principles and rules of Christian morality to bear upon these affairs; and thus, almost unconsciously, they will come to have one set of maxims for Sunday and sacred things, and another for week-days and secular business. Hence,

not unfrequently, the merchant, broker, or lawyer, who has indulged in devotional feeling in the house of God on the Sabbath day, and listened approvingly to the great truths of God's law, on Monday morning goes to his place of business, ready to practice all the sharp tricks known to keen and unscrupulous men of the world. In fact, the course of a large number of nominal Christians practically says: "Religion is an excellent thing in its way. We do not object to it in its own place. Its truths are very comforting. But to expect that practical men will allow it to interfere with the amount of their profits, and lessen their financial gains, is unreasonable and contrary to nature." And so, acting on the maxim that religious men cannot succeed in business, unless they do as others do, they conduct their transactions in a way which gives the world too much reason to say, that Christians are as eager for gain, as ready to overreach in a bargain, or engage in a dubious speculation, as those who have no fear of God before their eyes. No doubt there are many noble exceptions to this state of things—men whose Christian integrity is strong enough to bear the heaviest practical strain of temptation; and who put a conscience into all their transactions. But, there are quite enough who have bribed their consciences to be untrue to the

interests of others, to bring reproach and dishonor upon Christianity.

It is not in point to speak here of those glaring frauds, which bring open disgrace and judicial punishment upon those who practice them. To abstain from such criminal dishonesty is no sign of Christian integrity. Far lower motives may be sufficient to restrain men from deeds of that kind. But there is a selfish and unjust depreciation of the value of goods, by those who wish to purchase them, in order to get them cheap, that is nothing less than acting a falsehood. There are forms of adulteration, by substituting one thing for another, with a view to give an appearance of value greater than the real value, which must be ranked with the "false weight and the deceitful measure," which "are an abomination unto the Lord." There are sad instances of taking advantage of the necessities of the poor, to wring from them what could not otherwise be obtained, except at a greater cost, which reveal the dominant selfishness of the heart. This is frequently seen with regard to the labor of the poor, which is their sole wealth. How often even Christian people take advantage of the pressing necessities of the poor, to beat down their demands and obtain their services at the lowest possible rate—forgetting that

"their Redeemer is mighty;" and that "he that oppresseth the poor reproacheth his Maker." How very few could bear to have their business relations with others tested by the golden rule: "As ye would that men should do unto you, do ye even so to them?"

There are two considerations, which make it specially desirable that all Christian men should guard, with watchful self-distrust, against this recreancy to integrity in their dealings with others. First, because it is one of those sins most congenial to the natural instincts of the human heart. Self-interest, whenever it comes into play, is so prone to warp the judgment, that men easily slide into such a course without any sense of wrong-doing. Nothing is more common than blindness to our own pleasant and profitable sins. Indeed, many pride themselves on the sagacity with which they have outwitted others; when, if they saw their conduct in the clear light of Christian obligation, they have much greater cause for shame and humiliation than for self-gratulation.

It is also an undeniable fact, that this want of strict honesty and veracity in business transactions is most frequently hurled in the teeth of Christians by the irreligious, as an evidence that religion is "a

cunningly devised fable," which may amuse the fancy but has not power to control and mould the life. This practical illustration of incorruptible religious principle, in the ordinary commercial and social intercourse of man with man, derives great importance, from its being a kind of testimony in favor of religion, which unconverted men understand and prize. They set a high value on truthfulness and honesty, and deem the want of these virtues a serious defect. "However incompetent to apprehend what is eminently and peculiarly divine, they can appreciate truthfulness, manliness, and a fine sense of honor. If the Christian manifests these, in an eminent degree, worldly men will respect him, and give him credit for sincerity with respect to other parts of his experience and conduct, which they can neither understand nor appreciate. But, if these common and indispensable virtues are absent—if there be indications of the opposite vices—the most scrupulous regard to the Sabbath, the most regular attendance on the ordinances of religion, and the most liberal contributions to the Christian cause, will either go for nothing, or will awaken ridicule and disgust."* But if they see a man knowingly sacrificing a large sum of money, because he would not

* Rev. Stephen J. Davis.

take advantage of some legal flaw, or practice some evasion, they will conclude that there is something real in a religion that can exercise such power.

All this applies with equal force to the transactions of political and civic life. Some who have been regarded as respectable Christian men, go into our federal and local legislatures, and act in a way which seems to indicate that they hold there is one standard of action for private and another for public life. They will do things, in the character of Senators, members of Congress, and city politicians, which they would be ashamed to do in the relations of private life. There is a prevailing feeling, though it may not be expressed in words, that the principles of Christian ethics are not intended for such spheres, and cannot be applied there. So general is this conviction, that we often hear the sentiment, "you must not mix religion and politics." As if politics were a department of human activity, which lay wholly outside of the domain of religion; and which it would degrade religion to touch. If this be correct, it is high time that religion did meddle with politics. It is high time that those, who entertain such false ideas, were reminded that "the Lord reigneth;" and that "He will bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good

or whether it be evil." "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ."

There are some Christians who are enigmas. They seem to have all the sentiments and faith of Christians. They speak of their joy and peace in believing, and are earnest workers in some department of Church work ; and yet they will do things so contrary to Christian principle, that one is utterly puzzled to reconcile one part of their conduct with another. At one time, they are earnest in promoting the success of the Church, display great fervency of emotion, and perform acts of self-denying liberality. At other times, they manifest more weakness, selfishness, and inconsistency, than many who make no profession of being God's children at all. Looking at the good points in the character of these people, we are ashamed we ever doubted that they were true Christians. Looking at the unsubdued selfishness, that frequently breaks out in their contact with the world, we are at a loss to understand how they can possibly be living in the enjoyment of the favor of God. We do not here pause to solve this problem. But, however charitable we may be, in passing judgment on such persons, it must be admitted by all to be very undesirable that Christianity should be largely represented by this type of Christians.

Where such is the case, feebleness and failure must settle upon the Church.

It is an unscriptural misconception of the nature of religion, to think of it as consisting in creeds, forms of worship, or mental emotions, which may exist apart from the secular business of life. Religion is the life of God within the human soul. It implies such a giving of the full trust and love of the heart, as shall bring the whole motives and doings into harmony with God's will. It is the new principle of love becoming the supreme law of the life. It is the overthrow of our natural selfishness, by the love of God, shed abroad in the heart by the Holy Ghost. It embraces and controls the whole being. It regulates and governs its subjects in all the circumstances of this mortal probation. A Christian is never to be off duty. He is, in every time and place, under the obligations of discipleship. In all circumstances, he is bound by a thousand ties to witness by the purity of his life, as well as by words of grateful love, a good confession for his risen Saviour. The Scriptures know nothing of any distinction between a public and private standard of morality. The Christian is to be a Christian always; in his amusements and business, as well as in his

worship. Never swerving in his loyalty to truth and righteousness, but always acting,

“As in his great Taskmaster’s eye.”

Those who occupy positions of trust and influence, as well as those who are placed in circumstances of peculiar temptation, instead of being freed from obligations to live “as becometh the gospel of Christ,” have rather the greater responsibility to give, in their own lives, a practical proof of the adaptation and sufficiency of the religion of Christ for all conditions of human life.

Scarcely less misleading and unscriptural is the tendency to regard the secular vocations of life, by which men are compelled to earn their daily bread, as unholy and inimical to religious progress. There are, undoubtedly, some ways of earning a livelihood, in which no Christian can engage with a good conscience. But all honest toil is honorable. All work done with a pure purpose, by one whose heart is loyal to God, is sacred. One man’s physical toil may be far more acceptable to God than another man’s prayers. Labor is a Divine ordinance. And it would be at variance with all that we know of God, for Him to place men here in circumstances which render it necessary, in order to sustain life, to enter into employment that is in its nature sinful

and polluting. We instinctively feel that this cannot be so. The service of Christ is not some priestly or churchly service, marked off clearly from the common work of life. It is the common work of life performed in a godly spirit. This is clearly indicated by St. Paul's words to the Colossians: "Servants, obey in all things your masters according to the flesh; not with eye service as men pleasers, but in singleness of heart, fearing God; and whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord and not unto men; knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance, for ye serve the Lord Christ." This plainly teaches that all faithful service rendered to men, Christ reckons as service done to Himself. If the heart is consecrated to Christ—if the eye is single to God's glory—if the worker is looking unto Jesus—then the lowliest toil is ennobled. We do not need to retire from the world, and spend life in prayer and meditation, in order to serve God acceptably. We can best glorify God by exemplifying the power of His grace, amid the daily cares and toils of our earthly lot—so doing the secular work that is required of us, that we can at all times truthfully say,

"My hands are but employed below—
My heart is still with Thee."

All Christians should carefully guard against this disposition to regard the secular as synonymous with the sinful. Wherever it is cherished, it tends to promote that exclusion of religious principle from the secular business of life, which is one of the crying evils of the times—alike dishonoring to religion and prejudicial to the influence of the Church in the world.

III.

All distrust and disbelief of God's faithfulness, on the part of Christians, dishonor Him, and detract from their spiritual power. The implicit confidence of the soul, in the unchanging truth and love of the Creator, is the vital link which unites the feeblest saint to Him ; and inspires strength and patience for every emergency. When assailed by powerful adversaries, the Christian can say with Elisha : "They that be with us are more than they that be with them." When his way grows dark and perplexing, he can say with Asaph : "Thou shalt guide me with Thy counsel, and afterward receive me to glory." When his earthly hopes are crushed by disappointment, he can rest in the assurance, that "all things work together for good to them who love God." While others question the faithfulness of God, and

petulantly say, "My lord delayeth his coming," the Christian can say with humble confidence,

"I rest upon Thy word,
The promise is for me ;
My succour and salvation, Lord,
Shall surely come from Thee."

He does not walk by sight. He does not steer by the rolling billows around him ; but by the golden stars of promise, that shine down upon his soul from the sky of Divine Revelation. He is kept in perfect peace, because his mind is stayed upon God.

But when faith becomes feeble—when those, who once were strong in the Lord and in the power of His might, cast away that "confidence which hath great recompense of reward," then the world and the flesh wax strong, and prevail against the soul. "This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith." But, when the shield of faith is cast away, the Christian soldier has no protection against the fiery darts of temptation. Right views of spiritual truth inspire and strengthen the Christian to resist earthly influences. It is scarcely possible that those who have deep scriptural convictions respecting the value of immortal beings, and the importance of their salvation—the evil and danger of sin—the faithfulness and love of God—the vanity and in-

sufficiency of the pleasures of earth—the glory and blessedness of heaven, and the misery and perdition of the slothful and disobedient, can lightly turn from the holy commandment delivered to them, to walk in the ways of worldly folly. But the power of these truths to influence men depends upon the kind of faith with which they are grasped. If we hold them with a feeble grasp, their power is small. Then clouds cover the summits of the celestial mountains. Earthly attractions and temptations have power to draw us aside from the King's highway of holiness. We accept the bribes of the world, sleep on the enchanted ground, and are shorn of our strength and overcome by the enemy.

If the helm of faith no longer controls the vessel, it will drift out of the true course. If the centripetal force, that binds the hearts of Christians to the Sun of Righteousness, loses its hold on their affections, then their course becomes like the apparent motions of the planets, of which Milton speaks :

“ Their wandering course, now high, now low, then hid,
Progressive, retrograde, or standing still.”

For as faith declines love becomes weak, and ceases to control the unstable soul, that it should “ guide right onward to the crystal gates of bliss.”

But everything, on the part of a Christian, which indicates a want of harmony between his professed belief and his conduct, or that betrays a want of faith in God, seriously lessens his moral power over others. If, while he declares that God is his Father and heaven his future home, he is as easily disturbed by all untoward events, or worldly interests, as his irreligious neighbors, the inconsistency will be apparent to all.

“ And is it in the flight of threescore years
To push eternity from human thought,
And smother souls immortal in the dust ?
A soul immortal spending all her fires,
Wasting her strength in strenuous idleness,
Thrown into tumult, raptured or alarmed,
At aught this scene can threaten or indulge,
Resembles ocean into tempest wrought,
To waft a feather, or to drown a fly.”

If in affliction a Christian's grief is as extravagant, and as full of bitter repining, as if the affairs of this probationary state were not under the supreme guidance of a wise and gracious Father; if every stormy wind that blows fills him with faithless apprehension; if in times of peril and darkness, there are no signs of trust in Him who governeth all things according to the counsel of His will, it will

cause those who witness this unfaithfulness to doubt the sincerity of his profession, or the power of the religion which he represents. It is recorded that John Wesley, on his first voyage out to Georgia, in a violent storm at sea, was so impressed with the serenity and resignation of his Moravian fellow-passengers, that he formed a high estimate of their Christian character; and afterward from their lips learned the way of God more perfectly. Assuredly, if those, through whose testimony skeptical worldlings are to be led to believe in Christ, have not themselves faith in His word, but distrust His love and power, they cannot lead others to trust in Him.

IV.

Nothing shows more convincingly the triumph of Divine grace over the depraved propensities of human nature, than the sacrifice of self-interest, in obedience to the requirements of justice or benevolence. Selfishness is the great root sin of our nature; of which all forms of wrong-doing are only the outward expression. The various kinds of sin are nothing more than selfishness, seeking its gratification by different means. Dr. John Harris pertinently asks: "What is avarice, but selfishness grasping and hoarding? What is prodigality, but selfishness decorating

and indulging itself—a man sacrificing to himself as his own god? What is sloth, but that god asleep, and refusing to attend to the loud calls of duty? And what is idolatry, but that god enshrined,—man worshipping the reflection of his own image? Sensuality, and indeed all the sins of the flesh, are only selfishness setting itself above law, and gratifying itself at the expense of all restraint. And all the sins of the spirit are only the same principle, impatient of contradiction, and refusing to acknowledge superiority, or bend to any will but its own."

Selfishness exists everywhere. In every age and clime it has exerted its kingship over the hearts of men. The history of all nations is only an account of the struggles of selfishness to secure its own aims; and of the resistance offered to its more flagrant encroachments. The laws of all nations evince the same thing. They are the bulwarks which society has raised against the unjust aggressions of unbridled selfishness. The mental struggles of every virtuous soul, that is striving to rise higher in the scale of moral being, are simply a series of conflicts with its innate selfishness. The crimes that shock human feeling are but the outbursts of selfishness, making its way through restraints that had temporarily held it in check. Even the foibles of men are the little

pools, formed by the overflowing of the great river of selfishness, which makes up common existence. Not only does it prompt the darkest deeds of human wickedness; it taints the acts of bravery and benevolence with its polluting breath, and tarnishes their lustre and beauty.

But, though selfishness is the master sentiment of all, who not having passed from death unto life are still under the tyranny of the sinful instincts and passions of their unsanctified nature, this should not be true of those who have been "renewed in the spirit of their mind," and have come under the royal law of love. It is the design of the religion of Christ to deliver His people from the power of selfishness. They are no longer to "live unto themselves; but unto Him who died for them, and rose again." "The eyes of their understanding being enlightened; that they may know what is the hope of His calling, and what the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints." The love of God is shed abroad in their hearts to vanquish and expel sordid and selfish affections. The dead soul is quickened into new life, that instead of the bitter apples of pride and jealousy, they should bring forth the fruits of brotherly love and disinterested benevolence. They are the almoners of God's bounty. The guilt of all past sins

has been freely forgiven them, that their whole future life should be one grand anthem of thankful love to their great Forgiver. They are to be "kind, tender-hearted, forgiving one another," because "God for Christ's sake hath forgiven them." The brotherhood of man has been impressively taught in the words and works of Christ; that all His disciples may be willing to bear one another's burdens, and comfort those who are afflicted, "with the comfort with which they themselves are comforted of God."

The story of the perfect life is told in the Gospel, that the example of Him who "was wounded for our transgressions, and by whose stripes we are healed," might inspire us to learn of Him to be "meek and lowly of heart." The most striking and prominent feature of the character of the Man Christ Jesus is His perfect unselfishness. So essentially characteristic of Him is this quality, that if in our thoughts we divest Him of it, and think of Him as cherishing selfish thoughts, or doing selfish deeds, such as we condemn in men, though we may still invest Him with all power and wisdom, He is no longer the Christ of the Gospels. This is also the most prominent trait in the noblest of His servants. They rise in the scale of moral greatness, in proportion as they reflect the unselfish love of their Divine Redeemer.

To imagine Paul as being lured aside from "preaching the unsearchable riches of Christ," by the offer of some position of ease and personal emolument, jars us with a sense of incongruity that is painful. We feel that of whomsoever this might be true, it is morally impossible that it could be true of Paul.

From all this, it is evident that the reign of selfishness in the heart of a Christian is inconsistent with the religion of Christ—inconsistent alike with its commands, examples, and promises. Only so far as our natural selfishness is subdued by grace are we Christians; or have we power to prevail with men as witnesses for God. All who are self-seeking are yet carnal. It is a sign that Christ is not the supreme ruler of the heart. Of any who seem to be religious, and yet are covetous and proud, we may say, in the words of St. James, "this man's religion is vain." Our Lord himself asks: "How can ye believe, who receive honor one of another?" If the promotion of our own honor and advantage is pursued, as our main object, we cannot be just or generous to others. "For," says St. James, "where envying and strife is, there is contention and every evil work."

And yet, how many sad evidences of unsubdued selfishness flame out in the lives of professors of religion, indicating that the unholy fire within has

not yet been quenched by the sanctifying love of Christ. We see it in the jealous rivalries between Christian families, which often disturb the peace of churches; and even attract the notice of the world. We see it in the covetous spirit, which prevents many wealthy Christians giving of their money, to help the benevolent enterprises of the Church, on the apostolic principle—according as God hath prospered them in their gatherings. It is seen in the intolerant self-conceit, which leads so many to assume that “they are the people, and wisdom shall die with them;” and that all who differ from them are errorists and heretics. It is seen in the desire to occupy the places of worldly distinction; and in the prevailing forgetfulness of the Divine admonition,—“in honor preferring one another.” It is often painfully seen in the case of those who pass from affluence to poverty. Too commonly, the friends of brighter days recede as the shadows advance, and the children of misfortune are left to tread their dark and thorny paths, unfriended and alone. And we see this selfishness, probably most of all, in the prevailing indifference respecting the salvation of the unsaved. This evil requires fuller illustration.

V.

We need not wonder that the children of this world manifest no sympathy for the spiritual wants and sorrows of their friends ; for they cannot understand them. The world is destitute of the power, as well as the disposition, to relieve the wants which oppress the soul in its alienation from God. It has not, among its treasures, anything that can remove the misery and spiritual impotency which sin brings upon its votaries. But what is true of the world should not be true of the Christian. It is the design of his religion to counteract and destroy this native selfishness, which renders men indifferent to the wants and sufferings of others. Yet the general want of such deep, anxious concern for others, as would prompt to earnest personal effort for the salvation of the unconverted, is one of the most deplorable deficiencies of Christian character ; and one of the most serious hindrances to spiritual progress.

Among the great majority of those who bear the Christian name, there is no adequate sense of the responsibility of the individual believer, to be a witness for Christ in the world. They seem to think that, if the minister preaches the Gospel regularly,

and the ordinary machinery of the Church is kept in motion, this is all that is required. They regard it as specially the preacher's work, to labor for the salvation of sinners. What they contribute to pay pastors, missionaries, and other religious laborers, is a kind of commutation money, given to pay a substitute, in order that they may be relieved from personal duty. They join the Church, very much in the spirit of those who take passage in a ship for a distant port, expecting to be brought there safely, without any special exertion on their part. But this theory will not bear the light of the living Word of Truth. Every redeemed soul belongs to Christ; and all his talents should be fully consecrated to His service. You cannot, by the payment of money, buy yourself out of the active service, or cancel your personal obligation to work and witness for the Redeemer in the world. God will not deal with men in masses and communities. The Bible is full of this idea of individual obligation.

It cannot be that, while all material things have their place and purpose in the fulfilment of God's plans, men made in the likeness of the Creator, have no definite task to accomplish in the world. No: each redeemed soul has a special sphere of duty assigned him. He is to be, by word and deed, "a

preacher of righteousness" in that sphere. Those who have enlisted in the army of the living God cannot be mere spectators, viewing the battle between sin and holiness from afar. "So then every one of us shall give account of himself before God."

How deplorably small is the number of Christians who manifest true Christly sympathy for souls! Many members of Christian churches, who profess to have saving faith in Christ, have daily intercourse with their unconverted neighbors and friends, without ever addressing one earnest, kindly word, on the subject of personal religion, to those who, if their belief be true, are in peril of perdition. Christian parents too often allow their children to grow up from infancy to youth, without affectionately and earnestly pressing the matter of personal godliness upon their attention. And many prominent Christians come to the weekly prayer-meeting, and pray with much apparent fervency for a revival of religion, and then go away and, perhaps, in the interval till the next meeting, never put forth a single effort to lead a sinner to the Cross of Christ. One cannot resist the conviction that, in such cases, prayer is made a substitute for work. It requires less self-denial to pray for a revival than to live and work for

it. We would condemn a farmer who prayed for a crop, without preparing the ground and sowing his seed in due season. We would not commend the piety of the captain of a vessel, who depended on prayer alone to waft him across the ocean. We do not deem it sufficient to pray for the conversion of the heathen, unless we also send them missionaries and Bibles. Is it any more consistent to pray for the conversion of our children and neighbors, while we neglect to point out the error of their way, or invite them to turn to the Lord and seek salvation?

No doubt, it requires godly tact to speak effectively to others about their religious state. Injudicious and untimely exhortations may do more harm than good. But, as a general rule, words of counsel, that are prompted by a genuine godly concern for the spiritual good of those addressed, will be received in a kindly spirit. Must not the unconverted persons, with whom Christians associate, often wonder at their silence respecting religion? Are they not, in many instances, disappointed by the studied avoidance of this subject by their Christian neighbors? Is there not good reason to believe, that the awakening purpose in the hearts of the unsaved has often been repressed by this apparent indifference? Must not such inconsistent neglect create the impression, in

the minds of the unconverted, that Christians cannot really be sincere, in their professed belief respecting their guilt and danger and the value of personal religion?

The reason that these slothful servants commonly give, in justification of their indifference, is not the real reason. They say that they have no gift or talent for this kind of work. They are too timid, or too slow of speech, though they can speak fluently enough on all other subjects. The true cause, in the great majority of cases, is that they have not a large enough measure of the spirit of Christ. They need more of the love that gives wings to duty. They feel that their own lives have not been so consistent as to give weight to their admonitions. They have lived on so low a plane of religious life, that they feel conscious there would be something incongruous in their admonishing others about personal godliness. Yet this duty of cherishing deep concern for the salvation of sinners, and of putting forth direct individual efforts to lead our unsaved neighbors, children, and servants to Christ, is urged upon all Christians, by the weightiest considerations that can appeal to the minds and hearts of intelligent beings.

The Holy Scriptures clearly teach that the condition of all those who reject the salvation of the

Gospel is one that should call forth deep, pitying sympathy. They are exposed to the awful penalty of God's violated law, even death eternal. They are not conscious of their guilt and peril. Each day, that they continue to resist the word and Spirit of God, is widening the distance between God and their souls. The path, in which they are hurrying on so eagerly, ends in eternal perdition. The unbelief and love of sin, which hold them in vassalage, shut them out from the joy of salvation, and cause all the powers of their being to be misused and wasted. You would hold yourself to be guilty of base cruelty, if you knew that your neighbor was in serious danger, of which he was ignorant, and you neglected to warn him. But many Christians have neighbors and acquaintances in danger of being forever lost; and yet neglect to warn them of their danger. If a father and mother learned that their boy was skating on very thin and dangerous ice, how anxiously would they hasten to rescue him from his perilous position! But many Christian parents have children standing in the slippery and perilous places of sin, with but a step between them and spiritual death; and yet are as much at ease, and as unconcerned, as if all were peace and safety.

The Christian's own past experience of the bitter-

ness and bondage of the service of Satan, should impel him to desire the deliverance of those who are still wearing the degrading yoke, from which Christ has made him free. He has a personal knowledge of the world's seductive temptations; for he was himself led astray by its false lights. All that God has done for him, all that he has experienced of His saving grace, qualify and obligate him to engage in this personal work. Christian reader, do not forget that the Holy Spirit has led you to the Friend of sinners, that you might be able to point your perishing neighbors to this Good Physician. You have received the peace of God that passeth understanding, that you might be able to tell those around you, who are seeking happiness in earthly things, of the purer and more enduring joy of salvation. You have faith in the love and faithfulness of God, that you may reach out a helping-hand to those who are still floundering in the miry clay of unbelief. The love of God has been shed abroad in your heart, that you might feel something of the compassion of Christ for those who are dead in trespasses and in sins. These rich gifts of sovereign grace create weighty obligations, for all those who have received them, to "show forth the praises of Him who hath called them out of darkness into His marvellous

light." Your own safety is endangered by your neglect of this duty. In an important sense, the words of Jehovah to the prophet Ezekiel are applicable to every Christian: "If thou dost not speak to warn the wicked from his way, that wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at thine hand." You cannot selfishly neglect duty that God has assigned you, without guilt. "If thou forbear to deliver them that are drawn unto death, and those that are ready to be slain; if thou sayest, behold, we knew it not; doth not He that pondereth the heart consider it? and He that keepeth thy soul, doth not He know it? and shall not He render unto every man according to his works?"

The spirit of Christianity requires this duty of its disciples. It is a religion of sympathy and love. It breathes benevolent pity to erring and sinful men. It offers salvation, without money and without price, to the guilty and rebellious. In compassion for our race, God "spared not his own Son, but delivered Him up for us all." He who was "the brightness of His Father's glory, and the express image of His person," freely and graciously gave Himself "a ransom for all." This spirit of love and self-sacrifice, which appears in such divine fulness in our Lord

Jesus Christ, is to be reflected from the lives of all His faithful servants.

Just in proportion as Christians possess the spirit of the religion of Christ, will they realize their obligations to care for the souls of their perishing fellow-men. Contemplate the spirit of holy benevolence, of yearning sympathy for human suffering, of intense and compassionate desire for the salvation of sinners, which rings out from the Cross of Christ in its merciful announcements of hope and pardon for the guilty, and life for the dying—which shines forth with unearthly lustre in the spotless life and vicarious death of our great Redeemer—which glows with holy fervency in the apostles and martyrs, who counted not their lives dear unto them, if they could only finish the work which the Master gave them to do—which speaks in heavenly tones in all the precepts and promises of the gospel—and then ask yourself if you can consistently profess to feel the power of that spirit of love, to be governed by those precepts and admonitions, to live under the influence of those examples of unselfish consecration, and yet waste in selfish indifference those rich benedictions of love divine, forgetful of the claims of those who are perishing in ignorance of Christ's power to save. No, it cannot be. Reason and revelation unite in

saying: "If these things be in you and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ."

The gift of speech must be classed among those talents which may be improved or misused. Conversation is an instrument of influence, which may be so employed as to be the occasion of either great good or great evil. Words are not mere empty sounds. They are thought audible, or visible. They can move the heart to joy or grief, according to their import. They are the natural means for convincing, or persuading, those who differ from us into agreement with us. Words that come from the heart, warm with its emotions, generally touch the hearts of others. A direct, personal question may set a man thinking about his own religious state, who has hitherto closed his ears against the most powerful appeals from the pulpit. The deep, tender solicitude of a heart moved by the Spirit of God to care for the souls of others, has great power to impress and influence the hearts of sinners. There are numerous instances, recorded in religious biography, in which such manifestations of affectionate interest in the spiritual welfare of the unsaved have been the means of melting into contrition obstinate unbe-

lievers who had resisted the most forcible appeals and arguments of the preached gospel. When we read Paul's tender words to the Romans: "Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is that they might be saved,"—or when we hear him reminding the elders of Ephesus that "for the space of three years he ceased not to warn every one, night and day, with tears"—we do not wonder that the speech, and the preaching, of one who had so much of the tenderness of Christ, "was in demonstration of the Spirit and of power." Such ardent sympathy and unselfish devotion could not fail to move the hearts of men.

It is impossible to exaggerate the grandeur of the results that would accrue, if every member of the Christian Church was transformed into an ardent, active worker for Christ. It would soon wipe away the reproach, that the agencies of the Church are strangely out of proportion to the vastness of the enterprises which it attempts. Some years ago, the Rev. Robert Young of England, published a short essay on "The Conversion of the World;" in which he showed, by an indisputable calculation, that if each member of the Christian Church should, during each year, be instrumental in the conversion of one sinner, and these converts each in turn achieved the

same result annually, in a few years the population of the whole world would be converted. Looking at the slow progress of Christianity in the past, we are forced to conclude, that the ultimate triumphs of the Gospel can only be achieved through an aroused and quickened Church, each one of whose members shall be a living witness for Christ in the world.

Go while the light is beaming,
Ere the evening shadows fall ;
Rest not in idle dreaming,
While want and suffering call.

Gloom and gladness here are blended,
Earth has many a dreary lot—
Rise and work till life be ended—
Hearts are bleeding, linger not.

Go where dreary darkness lingers
O'er the life with dire control,
Loose with love's untiring fingers
Every fetter of the soul.

Shall a godlike soul immortal,
Once redeemed by blood divine,
Fail to pass the pearly portal,
Lost through faithlessness of thine ?

Shall the friends who walked beside thee,
Thro' thy pilgrimage below,
Say thou never once besought them
To escape the coming woe ?

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V.

Faults of Spirit and Temper.

As the sword of the best tempered metal is most flexible,
so the truly generous are most pliant and courteous in their
behaviour to their inferiors.

ANDREW FULLER.

Every heart that throbs may know
Fountains sweet or bitter ;
Either we may cause to flow
By the words we utter.

Then let none misuse the gift
God for use has given ;
Through Him every word may lift
Some one nearer heaven.

JOHN READE.

Give me that soul-superior power,
That conquest over fate,
Which sways the weakness of the ho'r,
Rules little things as great ;
That lulls the human waves of strife
With words and feelings kind ;
And makes the trials of our life
The triumphs of our mind.

CHARLES SWAIN.



CHAPTER V.

FAULTS OF SPIRIT AND TEMPER WHICH INJURE CHRISTIAN INFLUENCE.

THERE are many little things in the spirit, temper, and habits of Christians, which, although not amounting to wilful violations of principle, nevertheless, silently undermine their influence, and hinder their success, in their efforts as workers and witnesses for Christ in the world. We do not believe in the popular maxim that great results often spring from small causes. Every effect must have an adequate cause. And no cause can be small that is sufficient to produce a great result. Those who quote, in proof of this maxim, Newton's discovery of gravitation by the falling of an apple, should not forget that Newton himself was one of the factors in the case. The fall of the apple was the occasion, not the real cause of his discovery. But there are many

things apparently insignificant, that have deeper meaning, and power of producing graver results than might at first be supposed. Many things that are deemed trifling are not really trifling, or unimportant. Consequently, men are in danger of underestimating the importance of these little things; and imagining, because they appear comparatively small, they cannot be of much consequence for good or evil. But trifling occasions may afford an opportunity for the display of great qualities, or the operation of great causes. And things which seem insignificant are worthy of attention, because, though taken singly they are small, they are sufficiently numerous to be, when taken together, of great importance. Take, for example, opportunities of doing good. The opportunity of doing some great act, that will exert powerful and far-reaching effects, must in the nature of things be rare. But the opportunities of doing good, on a small scale, are so frequent that their faithful improvement must, on the whole, be more important than the unfrequent improvement of a few great occasions. And, in the same way, small defects of character, by the frequency with which they come into play in daily life, have power to do great harm.

Little things are often the signs of great things. We have already seen, in treating of unconscious

influence, that little things more truly indicate the real character, than more important acts which are the results of deliberate intention. When a man desires to make a favorable impression, he may, for the sake of the good opinion of others, do an apparently generous act which is really contrary to his nature; and which does not therefore indicate his real character.

On the other hand, the constant, undesigned outflow of the spirit that is in us is not an artificial product of our intentions; but is the expression of what we really are. And this, because continuous, makes a deeper impression, on those who witness it, than any occasional efforts could do. But what gives peculiar significance to the little things of the Christian life, is that they may be the expression of great principles. All the acts of an accountable spiritual being are significant. No part of his life is exempt from the control of law. As the blade of grass casts a shadow, as well as the kingly oak, so every act and every display of feeling make their impression upon the hearts of others.

Men are not likely to be favorably influenced by those who excite dislike or prejudice, however forcible their arguments, or scriptural their views. Hence, every thing in us that evokes such unfavor-

able feeling is a hindrance to our usefulness. A cheerful, genial spirit is a very desirable feature of Christian character. The impression it makes is vastly more favorable to Christianity than a stern and severe disposition. There is no reason why a Christian should not be cheerful and genial in his intercourse with men. Yet, there are some religious people who think that nothing but a grave, stern, and sombre style of conduct is consistent with religion. By their rigid and sour deportment, and the severity with which they condemn all relaxation, humor, and cheerfulness in others, they not unfrequently make the erroneous impression, on the minds of the young, that religion is a gloomy and sorrowful thing; and that its main characteristic is a deprivation of all the enjoyments of life. Many, from this cause, acquire an aversion to all religion, that leads them to reject its claims and privileges.

The grumbling Christian, who makes it a part of his religion to find fault with everything that is done and that is left undone, costs the church to which he belongs more than he is worth. There is a large discount to be made in estimating the value of his services. After all, it is a cheap kind of piety that can give no stronger evidence of zeal for God, than the severity with which it condemns the faults

of others. It is very easy to confess other people's sins. It costs but little self-denial to strike severely some one who has fallen into flagrant sin, and whom everybody condemn. But it is an unwarranted assumption, that the severity of our condemnation of the sinner is a satisfactory proof of our hatred of the sin. As a general rule, if Christians lived more completely above all suspicion of sympathy with the wrong-doing, they could more frequently dare to speak a word of sympathy, in arrest of severe judgment on the erring one. Christ, who was holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, always spoke with greater leniency and tenderness of the common sinners, whose guilt was notorious, than of respectable, self-righteous church-members, who, from their imaginary elevation, looked down with self-complacent scorn upon despised "publicans and sinners." It is true, that both civil and religious society must display a proper indignation and aversion for crime and wrong-doing, in order to protect itself against their advances. Nevertheless, a more forbearing, pitying spirit, towards the erring and fallen, would be much more effective in reclaiming them from the error of their way, and leading them to the Saviour, than harsh and unsympathetic condemnation.

Some time ago, I attended a religious service, held

on a Christmas-day, in a large city prison, for the benefit of the prisoners. Every person in the audience had been probably guilty of some crime against public order, property, or life. Several brief addresses were delivered to the prisoners. Each speaker seemed to avoid all severe and denunciatory language ; and appealed to the tender associations of childhood, and the great mercy of God, as displayed in Christ. I thought this very suggestive. Here was a congregation, so wicked that if ever the language of reproach and threatening was appropriate it would have been in such a case. Yet, without any concert, all the speakers instinctively felt that words of sympathy were most likely to make a good impression on the hearts of this audience of criminals. No doubt the conviction that prompted these Christian men was right. But the principle is one of general application. Unrelenting sternness towards the sinner repels and hardens ; pitying love softens and wins.

Closely allied to this undue severity, is the failure to discriminate between what is non-essential and what is vital. It does not subserve the interests of religion for Christians to do battle for every little thing—every crotchet and opinion, relating to matters of secondary importance, with as much pertinacious

zeal as if it were a fundamental truth on which the Law and the Gospel depended. A thing may be true, and possess a degree of value, and yet be not relatively so important as to thrust other things of equal worth aside, in order to exalt this crotchet above all reasonable measure. It is still worse, when Christians press their peculiar interpretations of Scripture, as if they were the very mind of God; and all who declined to accept them were justly to be denounced as rejectors of religion. Many a Protestant, who regards the dogma of the Infallibility of the Pope as a blasphemous heresy, practically cherishes as comfortable a sense of his own unerring correctness as any Roman Pontiff can do. This narrow self-assertion, when joined with a sour temper in controversy, is much more likely to awaken prejudice and opposition, than to win converts to the sentiments of those who display such a spirit.

There are some people who, under the plea of being frank and outspoken, claim the liberty of being discourteous. They deem it a virtue that they tell you your faults bluntly, and without circumlocution. Their candor does not prevent their offensive words wounding the feelings of those whom they favor with their opinion. There is generally, at the bottom, a complacent sense of their own superior wisdom, in

this class of persons. Your plain friend, who tells you so frankly and fully what he thinks wrong in you, often relieves a feeling of inward irritation in doing so ; and experiences a selfish gratification in a performance, which a more refined sense of what is due to the feelings of others would have prevented. In general, the more thorough and impartial is our consciousness of our own faults, the less forward will we be to lecture others about their defects.

Even men of the world expect their opinions and objections to be treated with courtesy, and fairly answered. They expect argument, not dogmatic assertions. At the present time, when the spirit of independent enquiry is abroad, and nothing is taken for granted without proof, it will not do for Christians to expect their mere assertions and assumptions to be accepted by unbelievers as convincing arguments. Those who are deeply entangled in the meshes of unbelief, need to be dealt with in a way that will make them feel you have an intelligent apprehension of their opinions and position. It is very unwise to attempt to refute the views of an unbeliever, or to answer his objections, before you understand what they really are. Giving evidence of an appreciative interest in the doubts and difficulties of a skeptic, and a frank and fair effort to

answer his objections, are far more likely to bring him to a knowledge of the truth, than dogmatic denunciation of his views and arguments.

“It is good to be always zealously affected in a good thing.” Yet, even zeal requires to be tempered with discretion, in order to be effective. The blending of prudence and kindness is very necessary, for Christians, in their intercourse with those whom they desire to bring to Jesus. Sinners cannot be driven from their errors by the pharisaic censures of those who have neither sympathy nor liberality, and whose spirit is no better than their own.

In the business of secular life, manners, or the mode and spirit in which actions are performed, make an impression upon those with whom we have dealings, that greatly hinders, or helps our influence. Genial and agreeable manners are a great element of success in secular business; while gruff and disagreeable ways of doing things repel people. There is truth in the popular adage, that a man’s manners frequently make his fortune. The same thing is true, with regard to Christian life and work. Every Christian is a merchant, inviting all within the circle of his influence to buy the goodly pearls of truth, and sell them not. He is a teacher, teaching those who are ignorant of the love and power of God

lessons whereby they may be saved. He is a recovered leper, commending to diseased men the great Physician who has healed him. His success in this work depends largely upon his manner in little things. From what we know of human nature, we may be confident that the effect of any admonition on the subject of religion, depends quite as much upon the manner in which it is given, as on the truth or importance of the word spoken. The best possible counsel may be given in a way that will prevent it doing any good. Some writer says, truly, that the gospel of holiness, which calls upon all men everywhere to repent and renounce their idols, has enough in it that is unacceptable to the depraved hearts of men, without those who recommend it adding their own offensiveness to it to hinder its success.

The same thing is true of the impression made by actions, as well as of that made by words. A valuable service may be rendered by one person to another, in such a way that it has no tendency to make the obliged person grateful. A very slight favor may be rendered in a manner that will create a feeling of thankful obligation, on the part of the receiver. It is not desirable that Christians should imitate the unmeaning affectation of fashionable

foppery; or the insincere compliments of shallow flatterers, which prevail in worldly society. Neither should they, for the sake of making a favorable impression, simulate an interest which they do not really feel. But every Christian should be courteous in all his intercourse with others. "The ornament of a meek and quiet spirit is, in the sight of God, of great price." Though the manners may be improved by intentional effort, they are the natural expression of character and disposition. True courtesy has a spirit of humility and unselfishness as its basis; for it implies a studious regard for the feelings and interests of others. But pride always thrusts selfish interests to the front; and blinds the soul, in which it reigns, to the claims of others. Where personal vanity bears rule, neither justice nor generosity can find a home. Without humility, we can neither appreciate nor admire the virtues of others.

A true conception of the dignity and worth of manhood will greatly help to promote a courteous bearing towards all men. There was genuine sagacity in the Dutch professor, who was in the habit of taking off his hat before his students; because, as he said, he saw in them the future magistrates, judges, and legislators of the country. So the Christian, who sees in every fellow-creature he meets, a being

made in the image of God, redeemed with the precious blood of Christ, who may rise to inherit a lot among the sanctified in heaven, will feel that there is in this fact a sufficient reason for conducting himself with consideration and courtesy towards all classes of human society. The work of his Master requires this at his hands. This thought is presented with great force and beauty by St. Paul, in his second letter to Timothy: "And the servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all, apt to teach, patient, in meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth."

Christian courtesy of manner and spirit does not imply any cowardly submission to what is false and wrong. It is no cringing sycophancy, that smiles approval on evil and good alike. It is not the silence, that results from want of courage to speak; nor the suppleness that assents to everything in order to win favor. It is the duty of the Christian to rebuke the evildoer, and to give no uncertain sound respecting popular sins. There are times when it is his duty to cherish strong feelings of indignant disapproval, and to express them in corresponding language. Christian courtesy does not crush out manliness. "It is perfectly compatible with self-

respect, moral courage, outspokenness, and manly bearing. It does not require that honest convictions should be suppressed; but only that, in the expression of them, there should be the avoidance of what would be gratuitously unpleasing. It permits the statement of the strongest reasons, the use of the hardest arguments; only stipulating that, in the spirit and manner of urging them, there shall be nothing offensive and insulting. The most courteous of men are sometimes the most loyal to truth, the most manly in avowing, and the most earnest in carrying out their convictions. In matters of importance they are firm and unbending as a rock; but in their manner there is nothing to give pain. The Apostle Paul was a model of Christian courtesy; but he was not less a model of Christian manliness."* The Divine Redeemer was meek and lowly of heart; yet he denounced, in words of burning indignation, the hypocrisy and formality of the Scribes and Pharisees, who "trusted in themselves that they were righteous and despised others."

It often happens that qualities which are natural and characteristic, apart from religion altogether, are stumbling-blocks to unbelievers, when they are seen in Christians. If a man is rude and uncultivated, or

* Rev. S. J. Davis.

obstinate and unprogressive, even though religion may have to some extent toned down these peculiarities, irreligious people will often speak of these things as if they were the direct product of religion; instead of, as they really are, mental infirmities which religion has lessened, but not wholly subdued. But though these defects of character may have only an indirect relation to religion, if they exert an enfeebling and unfavorable effect upon his personal influence, the Christian should seek deliverance from everything that hurts his usefulness. Though the defect may not be the direct product of his religion, his religion should prompt him to labor for its removal.

This principle may be fitly illustrated by that class of persons who cling tenaciously to certain stereotyped ideas, which they deem it a crime to question and an honor to defend. The earnestness with which they shut out all new light, makes it seem as if, by some violent wrench of nature, an opening had been made at some time or other into their minds, large enough to allow a few small ideas to percolate through—then the aperture had closed, and their intellectual stock remains shut in from the sunlight of truth, incapable of receiving either addition or expansion. Sometimes it is a theory

these men of one idea have got ; and they bring it out on every occasion that presents any pretext, with complacent satisfaction, as if it were a key that could unlock all the mysterious problems of mind and matter. At other times, it is some peculiarities respecting the beginning of their religious life, around which a halo of glory is wreathed, making them, for all time, a standard by which all Christian experience is to be judged. Such men may have ample opportunities of mental improvement, and yet rarely add a thought to their fund of ideas. They are so fully satisfied that they are wiser than most men whom they meet, they expect to learn nothing, and they are not disappointed. They often look down, with pity, on men who take broader and deeper views of life than they are capable of cherishing. The tides of emancipated thought may surge around them with unvonted energy ; but they understand not the signs of the times. They wholly misapprehend the meaning of the forces that are acting upon society in their day. Some half truth is often exalted into an infallible axiom ; and is made a test by which all dissenting from it are condemned. When people of this type are brought under religious influence, and connect themselves with the Christian Church, they too often retain these mental habits,

and carry them into the sphere of religion, very much to its disadvantage. Intelligent people, who are not Christians, will class the religious opinions of such Christians with their narrow and stereotyped ideas on other subjects. They will naturally conclude that the man who is narrow and unreasonable, in his views about secular things, will be the same in his thoughts on religious questions. Hence, if they find that the opinions of a Christian neighbor on literary, social, or political subjects, are one-sided and intolerant, they will conclude that he is not one who can be safely accepted as a teacher in questions of theology and religion.

We have seen, in the previous chapter, that the principles of Christianity are to permeate the whole life. There is to be no separation between the little and the great things, as if one lay within the domain of religion, and the other belonged to some region to which the laws of the religious life do not apply. It has been well said, "The power which religion should exercise over the life and conduct is not simply like a dash of color, here and there upon the canvas; but it is as if the canvas were dipped bodily into the color, till every thread of the fabric became saturated with it."

If the love of Christ is the governing and controlling power in the soul, it will mould and color even the trifles of life. It comes down upon the springs of being like the genial sunlight and rain from heaven, that quicken the tiniest plant as well as the kingliest tree. It waters the whole garden of the heart, and blesses everything small and great. The spirit of a man towards children and servants; the manner in which he conducts himself towards those who are of lower social standing than himself; the temper with which he meets criticism and opposition; the spirit in which he bears the little irritations of daily life; his style of living and dress; the way in which he spends his leisure time; the character of his recreations and of his hospitality; the consideration he shows for the feelings of those who differ from him; his treatment of the inferior animals; his sentiments concerning passing events—all reveal character and exert influence. Each may seem small in itself; but, taken together, they make up a life which should be controlled and inspired by the spirit of the Divine Master. It was to such minor things, and not to great principles of belief and heroic deeds, that Christ referred, when He said to His disciples, "Be ye wise as serpents and harmless as doves."

IN doctrine truly orthodox,
In dealings sternly just ;
And, though his talents are but small,
He does not let them rust.
That he has virtues all must own,
And good his zeal has wrought ;
But he has some unpleasant ways,
That make it dearly bought.

He has a certain type of creed,
Religion, mien, and grace ;
And all who do not bear his marks,
He deems in doubtful case.
'Tis odd, he never seems to think
That such a thing might be,
That some one else should know the truth,
And love it well as he.

He magnifies a little thing,
Some crotchet of his own,
As if the life of Church and State
All hung on that alone.
He's very keen to mark a fault,
Of mercy little knows,—
On every weakness—but his own—
He deals unsparing blows.

I question not his zeal, nor doubt
That he is quite sincere,—
He may have sweeter thoughts within,
Than outwardly appear ;
And still, I think, he never yet
Has fairly understood,
That selfish zeal bereft of love,
May do more harm than good.

VI.

Scriptural Holiness the Great Want of the
Church and of the World.

Heaven is epitomized in holiness, and it is the true badge and livery of the heaven-born.

FLAVEL.

I know the blood of Thine eternal Son
Has power to cleanse even me ;
Oh ! wash me now in that all-precious blood ;
Give my soul purity ;
Scatter the darkness, bid the day-star shine,
Light up the midnight of this soul of mine ;
Let all be song and joy !

BONAR.

I am persuaded that I shall obtain the highest amount of present happiness, I shall do more for God's glory and the good of men, and I shall have the fullest reward in eternity, by maintaining a conscience always washed in Christ's blood, by being filled with the Spirit at all times, and by attaining the most entire likeness to Christ in mind, will, and heart that it is possible for a redeemed sinner to attain in this world.

MCHEYNE.

Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord.

ST. PAUL.



CHAPTER VI.

SCRIPTURAL HOLINESS THE GREAT WANT OF THE CHURCH AND OF THE WORLD.

I.

WHEN the hands of a watch go wrong, or do not move at all, the fault is not in the hands, but in the mainspring, or some essential part of the internal mechanism. When external symptoms of disease appear upon any part of the body, these symptoms are not the disease. They are but the signs of something deeper and more serious. When the blood moves so slowly through the arteries and veins, that the body is easily chilled by a wintry atmosphere, the action of the heart must be feeble. When the leaves of a tree wither out of season, and the branches decay, there is something seriously wrong at the root. So the various forms of selfishness and inconsistency, which have been named in

previous chapters, as hindrances to the power and progress of Christianity in the world, are not primary causes, whose removal would make all that is wrong right. They are only the visible symptoms of the inner spiritual disease that has fastened upon the soul—the alarming signs that the religious life is too feeble to repel the temptations of the world, the flesh, and the devil.

It is the weakness within that gives power to outward enemies. The same temptation that is almost irresistible to one man, has no power over another. As there are conditions of the body, in which the current of life is feeble, and there is a strong liability to catch the infection of any prevalent contagious disease, so there are also moral states of the soul, which render men specially liable to yield to any strong temptation that assails them. It is not the unparalleled strength of the gale which uproots the tree and wrecks the vessel. It was because the roots of the tree had a slight hold in the soil, and the vessel was not seaworthy, that the storm proved fatal. In our efforts to remove the evils that so largely paralyze the influence of Christians on the world, we must bear in mind that no remedy is sufficient that does not reach the root. You might as well expect to cure some serious internal disease,

by local applications to the external symptoms, as to hope to cure the evils that have been mentioned merely by more careful attention to conduct. The evil lies too deep for that. Nothing can meet the actual necessities of the case, which does not remove the spiritual coldness and weakness that render so many Christians unable to repel the spirit and example of the world.

II.

The subject of the Higher Christian Life is, at the present time, attracting extensive attention. Not to speak of the conventions and gatherings specially for the promotion of holiness, the subject has been studied and discussed, more or less, in all the Protestant churches. Whatever errors of opinion, or mistakes of judgment, may have been blended with recent expositions of this doctrine, we should hail the awakened interest in this subject as a hopeful sign. We must beware lest, in relation to this movement, our prejudices should lead us ignorantly to "fight against God." All movements, that so far enlist the interest of men as to acquire volume and force, must have some root in real human wants. They may be crude and incomplete; but if they did not appeal to some felt need, they would not have

power to gain extensive sympathy. In all great reformatory movements in the past, though, at first, both the extent of the evil and the nature of the remedy may have been but imperfectly understood; yet, like the cry of a dumb animal in pain, the prevailing sentiment indicated something wrong that required a remedy. So it is in this movement. There may be theological haziness in much of the teaching; and want of harmony between the teachers, because of their being trained in different schools of theology; but it is the cry of a felt want. It is the confession of spiritual need and weakness, which must precede an increase of strength. It is the sign of an awakened hunger and thirst after righteousness, which God will not leave unsatisfied. Its aspirations are upward and heavenward. The want which the movement represents is a real and serious want; and it directs our thoughts to the true source of help, even to "the Lord who made heaven and earth," who "giveth liberally and upbraideth not." Scriptural holiness, of character and life, is the great want of the Church and of the world, because it implies the purification of the fountain from which all these streams of worldliness and inconsistency flow.

It is no part of my purpose, in this essay, to

expound or enforce any of the special theories of the "Higher Christian Life,"—"The Full Assurance of Faith," "Christian Perfection," or "Entire Sanctification"—that distinguish different sections of the Church, and different schools of theology. A full and Scriptural exposition of the philosophy and theology of this subject is by no means unimportant, or unnecessary. But the design of this chapter is not so ambitious. It is simply to urge all my Christian readers to seek a deeper personal knowledge of God's power to save from the dominion and pollution of sin; a larger measure of the sanctifying love of Christ; a richer experience of the power of Scriptural godliness in their own hearts and lives.

III.

It will be admitted by all, that under the common name of Christians are classed two widely different types of religious character. The one inspires confidence and kindles admiration. The other excites distrust, and perhaps even aversion. As naturalists find, among the lower forms of life, some specimens about which they are in doubt whether to class them with the vegetable or animal kingdom, so there are, as we have seen, some kinds of Christians which we hardly know whether to class

as belonging to God's kingdom or not. Yet, we are not justified in assuming that all who are marked by any imperfection or defect "have neither lot nor part in the matter." The epistles to the Seven Churches of Asia show us the risen Redeemer looking down from heaven, with forbearing sympathy on the weakness and defects of the primitive Christians. He rebukes the lukewarm, admonishes the erring, and calls back to repentance those who had fallen, in a way that proves He did not regard as reproaches all who were not blameless. The same thing is shown in the language of St. Paul to the Corinthians. He says: "And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ." But though they were "carnal," and "walking as men," he does not deny them a place in the brotherhood of faith. He showed the same forbearing leniency towards some who entertained doctrinal opinions, which he condemned as erroneous. General observation will confirm this view. We have all seen persons, "weak in the faith," whose religion appeared to give them little joy or strength; and yet, because of "some good thing in their heart towards the Lord God of Israel," we could not repudiate their claim to some place in the household of faith.

But there is a higher Christian life. It is not a mere dream of the imagination. If Scripture and observation testify to the existence of the low form of Christian life, spoken of above, they also most emphatically teach that there is a "more excellent way." We have met in the association of actual life, as well as in the records of the righteous dead, a nobler type of piety than this. We have seen, as the teaching of God's Word would lead us to expect, Christian men and women of unfaltering faith and self-denying zeal, who rejoiced in the Lord always, and were "ready to every good work;" whose mere presence quickened and strengthened what was good in others; and whose minds and hearts seemed to be constantly lifted above earthly things, and stayed on God—

"Men on earth devoted to the skies,
Like ships at sea, while in, above the world."

I will not attempt to analyze this experience, or call it by any exclusive name. It is sufficient to know that the low type of experience, that has been just described, is not a necessary condition resulting from any withholding of God's grace; and that this higher state is a blessed reality, desirable and attainable by every soul who sincerely hungers and

thirsts after the righteousness which is by faith in Christ. If the wide-spread existence of a low type of piety is the cause of most of the evils that afflict the Church, it is unspeakably desirable that all who name the name of Christ "should depart from iniquity." What is needed is, that those who have doubted and wandered for years in the wilderness of Sinai should go up in faith and take possession of the goodly inheritance, which the Lord our God freely and graciously offers.

IV

In a matter of such great practical gravity, it would be foolish to dispute about words. Let all Christians, who believe that there is such a thing as true godliness, and that God is willing to bestow it upon all who seek for it with all their heart, seek to enjoy it. Let those who have sat in darkness, with the symptoms of spiritual death upon them, be inspired to desire earnestly this deeper piety, which we denominate by the term Scriptural holiness.

There can be no such thing as a holy and powerful Church made up of unholy and inconsistent members. The tone of the Church, as an organized society, must sink to the level of the members who compose it. The notion that because of its orthodox

creed, its honored historic names, or its graceful ritual, a Church can be bright with the beauty of holiness, while its members are unholy and worldly, is a delusive falsehood, which leads to the substitution of a faultless ideal Church, which may have really no existence, for the imperfect and lifeless real Church. This mental habit keeps many from seeing defects that require to be corrected. Just as the fact of a father and mother being ignorant of the real character of their son and thinking him innocent and virtuous, while he is wicked and vicious, would lull them in a false security and prevent them doing their duty to reform and save him.

There is a dangerous, though natural tendency among Christians to bring the standards of the religious life down to the level of their own experience. The unconverted man questions the reality of personal religion, because, if he frankly admitted the genuineness and attainability of such an experience, he would be without excuse in neglecting the claims of Christianity. A similar feeling comes into play among those "who are weak in the faith," in respect to the higher life of full consecration. Like the objector to the theory of the planetary worlds, who refused to look through the astronomer's telescope, lest he should see them and be no longer able to

maintain his objections, when they are urged to "come up higher," or to seek for a larger measure of sanctification, or when the privilege and claims of scriptural godliness are pressed upon them, they absolve themselves from the obligation to comply with these admonitions, by expressing doubts as to the truth of the doctrine. When an unflattering picture of the ordinary type of Christian character is drawn and presented, to show the necessity for spiritual improvement, there are many, both ministers and others, who feel somewhat like the lawyer in the gospel, when he said: "Master, thus saying, thou reproachest us also." They feel that they cannot admit the scripturalness of the doctrine, and the attainability of this deeper experience of Christ's saving power, without, in effect, confessing that they are living in the neglect of privileges which God freely offers to all His children. There are, however, many instructive examples of persons who at one time doubted, or disbelieved, the reality of this full assurance of faith, who have themselves passed into the glorious liberty of the sons of God; and afterwards confessed that what they said against holiness they said "ignorantly in unbelief,"—that they erred, "not knowing the Scriptures nor the power of God." Grace has treasures of which unsanctified

nature knows not. "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him ; but God hath revealed them unto us by His Spirit." It is the believer's privilege "to know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge."

V.

However strong may be the tendency among men to erect a low standard of piety, that will allow them to take comfort in their lukewarmness ; and by "measuring themselves by themselves," to escape the condemnation that a more impartial examination in the light of the Divine standards would involve, the Word of God explicitly indicates that He offers and requires holiness, as the privilege and duty of all His children. It is suggestively observed by Bishop Huntingdon, that, in the New Testament, "sanctification is an actual and frequent theme of evangelical meditation and exposition." God commands and requires holiness. St. Peter says : "But as He which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation ; because it is written, be ye holy, for I am holy." St. Paul says to the Thessalonians : "For this is the will of God, even your sanctification." "For God hath not called us unto uncleanness, but

unto holiness." To the Ephesians: "According as He hath chosen us in Him, before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love." To the Hebrews: "Follow peace with all men; and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord." Christ's own summary of our duty towards God is,—“Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind.”

If these requirements seem to imply more than our poor sinful nature can render or attain, we have the assurance that “our sufficiency is of God.” The growth of the Christian in sanctification does not give him any ground for self-righteous egoism. The glory of all that is good in him is due to Him, “who is able to do exceeding abundantly, above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us.” It is a just inference, that what God clearly requires of us as a duty, He will supply the necessary grace to accomplish. Hence, while the commands show our obligation to be holy, the promises show us by whom the grace of sanctification is given. The purpose, for which these promises are given, is distinctly stated by the Apostle Peter: “Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises; that by these ye might be partakers of the

Divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust." This agrees with the prayer of our Redeemer: "Sanctify them through Thy truth; Thy word is truth." God's promise to His ancient people has not been rescinded. He said by Moses: "And the Lord thy God will circumcise thy heart, and the heart of thy seed, to love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, that thou mayest live." By the mouth of the prophet Ezekiel God says: "Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you." The Apostle John says: "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." The promises of the Divine Word are the warrant for our expectations. When doubt assails, the Christian's answer is, "For I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed to Him against that day."

To make sinful men holy is the great object of Christ's work and suffering, and of all the agencies of the Gospel dispensation. It is a very limited idea of salvation, that regards it merely as deliverance from Divine wrath here, and from eternal perdition

hereafter. It signifies much more than this. In the Holy Scriptures, salvation signifies deliverance from those evils that sin has wrought in the soul. A religion that merely delivered from the penalty of the law, but could not unseal the blind eyes and make the feeble will strong; that could not quicken the dead soul into life, purify the unholy nature, and subdue selfishness, could not supply the wants of helpless and sinful men. The Bible constantly teaches that men are both guilty and unholy by nature. It offers forgiveness for human guilt; and sanctification for the inward pollution which defiles the heart. To save lost men from their sins, in this double sense, is the great object of the Incarnation and death of Christ. St. John says: "For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil." The same idea is expressed by St. Paul in the epistle to Titus. He says of Christ our Saviour: "Who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto Himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works." Zacharias, when filled with the Holy Ghost, declared that the coming of the Saviour was the fulfilment of the Divine purpose and promise,— "that He would grant unto us, that we being delivered out of the hand of our enemies, might

serve Him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before Him, all the days of our life."

In the epistle to the Ephesians, Paul declares that Christ gave Himself for the Church, "that He might sanctify and cleanse it, with the washing of water by the word, that He might present it to Himself a glorious Church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish." By no fair interpretation can these texts be emptied of their wealth of meaning, and made to harmonize with the theories of those who, "having a form of godliness, deny the power thereof."

The inauguration of the work of the Christian Church, in the world, was by a glorious baptism of the sanctifying Spirit on the day of Pentecost, which taught the infant Church the true source of power. This power from on high is still needed to make the Church "mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds," where the powers of darkness entrench themselves to fight against the truth. The day of Pentecost was the beginning, not the termination, of the dispensation of the Spirit. Without this power all our churchly agencies and machinery for converting the world will be utterly ineffectual—

"As idle as a painted ship
Upon a painted ocean."

For, as the author of "The Tongue of Fire" appositely says, "a religion without the Holy Ghost, though it had all the ordinances and all the doctrines of the New Testament, would not be Christianity."

This doctrine of Scriptural godliness has not remained merely a beautiful theory for the cloister of the recluse, or the ideal speculations of the Christian philosopher. It has been wrought out in living examples by the finger of God; and fully tested in actual contact with sin and temptation. Leaving all special theories of holiness out of sight, it must be admitted, by all Christians, that these Scriptural declarations, respecting God's purposes and man's privileges, have not been a dead letter. All along the Christian centuries, the reformers and workers who led the armies of the living God, in the victories which most gloriously extended the kingdom of Immanuel in the world, were men who were anointed with this Spirit of pentecostal power from on high.

In the life-history of such holy men as Rutherford and Baxter; George Herbert and John Wesley; Whitefield and Payson; John Fletcher and Harlan Page; John Elliot and Robert McCheyne, and hundreds more, living and dead, we have beautiful practical illustrations of that devout, consistent god-

liness which it is the main design of this essay to enforce. The footprints they have left behind inspire us to follow them, as they followed Christ.

These saintly souls have not been the exclusive property of any one section of the Church. Each denomination has its names, cherished and revered. But, to whatever tribe of our Christian Israel they belonged while living, death lifts their influence, as well as their souls, out of the narrow limitations of earth. It is also a cause of thankful gladness, to know that in the present day, from every portion of "the sacramental host of God's elect," testimonies are heard to the immutable power and grace of our great High Priest, "to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him." Whatever differences of opinion may exist, respecting the philosophy of holiness, all who are living in the light of God's countenance will agree, that it is such a taking hold of God's strength as supplements our weakness—such peace and power as overcome the world—and that it is to be sought in faith from the God of all grace. Yet, how many thousands of Christians continue to carry their burdens of doubt and fear, and bemoan their spiritual leanness as despondingly as if there was neither remedy nor deliverance—as if God's saving grace was inadequate to supply their soul-need!

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VI.

Many are prevented from seeking a personal experience of scriptural holiness, and even cherish an aversion to the very word, because of misconceptions as to its import. It does not, as some objectors assume, mean impeccability—freedom from liability to sin. It is necessary for all to watch and pray that they enter not into temptation. It does not mean deliverance from such mental defects as commonly cause errors of judgment. Religion does not bestow upon us a new set of mental faculties, nor destroy our natural intellectual characteristics. It purifies and directs the constitutional tendencies. Natural ambition is directed to high and worthy objects. Constitutional combativeness is directed against personal and public evils, which require removal or correction. Acquisitiveness, zeal, shrewdness, and energy, are all directed into channels in harmony with the spirit of the consecrated life. Neither does it imply such completeness as to render the character incapable of growth or improvement. All the Christian graces are in their nature capable of growth and increase. Nor is it unreasonable to suppose that, even in heaven itself, there will be an unending development of our powers. Holiness is

not the mere stir of emotional gladness, which may thrill the heart with the flush of ecstasy, and leave the life just the same as before. In the Bible, when applied to persons, it always embraces the idea of holy living. It does not imply that those who enjoy this higher life are prompted, by conscious superiority, to regard themselves holier and better than others. True holiness cannot have this effect, for it implies such a discovery of our frailty and unworthiness, as must humble the soul before God; and such an apprehension of the sufficiency of Christ, as quiets every faithless fear, and yields unfailing consolation for life's trials, and strength for every burden and battle.

Holiness means simply godliness—the conformity of the soul to the will and image of God. To be holy is to be what God, in the purposes and provisions of His love, means each Christian to be. Every Christian should therefore study devoutly God's Word, to find out what his Father in heaven would have him to be and to do. There must be some standard of experience, character, and conduct which God, who perfectly knows all about their natural and gracious ability, expects and requires His children to attain. This state is indicated in the Bible by the term holiness. It embraces un-

faltering trust in God; the assurance of His forgiving love; and supreme love for God, resulting in full consecration to His holy service.

In saying that scriptural holiness always embraces the idea of holy living, I do not mean by this merely outward conformity to the Divine law. More than this is implied. A holy life cannot flow from an unsanctified heart. There must be a condition of soul, an inward experience of the sanctifying grace of the Holy Spirit, as the cause of a holy life. But we should carefully guard against the tendency to think of holiness as an experience, chiefly affecting the feelings, and not necessarily transforming the life. It is not something merely negative—not merely a cleansing out of the impurity of nature, preparatory to the indwelling of Christ, and the development of the positive graces and fruits of the Spirit in the character. The evil principle reigns in every heart, only so far as it is expelled by the opposite good principle. Nothing can drive out the earthly and sinful affections, but what Dr. Chalmers calls “the expulsive power of the new affection” of love to Christ. Unbelief continues till it is driven out by living faith. Wrong views of God shall never cease to mislead till the soul, enlightened by the Spirit of Truth, beholds the glory of His char-

acter. Pride does not go out before humility comes in. Nothing but the love of truth can emancipate from the tyranny of falsehood. It is the coming of the day that banishes the night. It is the breath of spring that breaks the icy chain of winter. Nothing but the new life can deliver from spiritual death. Holiness is not something added to religion. It is practical religion. Faith, hope, love, patience, zeal, fortitude, and joy in God, are all embraced under the term holiness.

VII.

Regarding holiness, then, as synonymous with deep, earnest piety—the maturity of the graces of the Christian character—two things are beyond dispute. It is unspeakably desirable that Christians should be holy. And the promises of God, and the experience of His saints, prove that it is an attainable blessing. The desirability of holiness may be shown, from the importance and necessity of those graces of the Spirit which are the constituent elements of a holy character. In seeking holiness, we are seeking those things most essential to the spiritual life. Strong faith in God is not merely a good thing that it would be an advantage to possess. It is an essential requisite of a strong Christian character. We

have seen, in a previous chapter, that when faith is weak the attractions of the world prevail against the soul. A weak faith fails to apprehend the greatness of the Christian calling, the urgency of its claims, and the blessedness of its rewards. The difference between the religious characters of men mainly results from the difference in the quality of their faith. For calm, vigorous faith vitalizes every other grace. It quickens love into an absorbing affection. It kindles zeal into a flame of earnest desire to spend and be spent for God. It unscales the eye of hope to behold the glory to be revealed; and fills with holy longings for the unclouded joys of the celestial city. It breathes an intenser meaning into all the great truths of Divine Revelation; and nerves the soul to resist the fiercest temptation, by the consciousness of God's presence which it bestows. It soothes and calms the spirit amid the wildest storms which disturb the atmosphere around it. It opens, to mortal want and weakness, immortal fountains of strength for duty and consolation for sorrow. If Christians could only grasp right conceptions of the power and preciousness of faith, would they not more fervently breathe to heaven the prayer of the disciples, "Lord, increase our faith?"

Yet, it cannot be denied that unbelief, which

darkens and enslaves the world, also spreads its gloomy pall over the Church, and greatly diminishes its strength. God is constantly dishonored by the distrust and doubt of those who are called by the Christian name. This unbelief is utterly unjustifiable. God has revealed Himself to us as possessing in infinite perfection the power, wisdom, and goodness, which vindicate His claims to the unfaltering confidence of His children. By the saints of every age, grateful testimony has been borne to His faithfulness. None who have trusted in Him have been confounded. He has ever been to His people "a present help in time of trouble." In ten thousand instances, He has vindicated his faithfulness as the hearer and answerer of prayer. Every true Christian has had personal experience of His truth and love. He can say, in the language of the Psalmist, "I sought the Lord and He heard me, and delivered me from all my fears." Because Peter had the word and example of Christ to inspire confidence, the Master rebuked him when he began to sink, saying: "Oh! thou of little faith! wherefore didst thou doubt?" Are not the doubt and distrust of Christians, respecting God's willingness and power to save from sin, much more unreasonable and inexcusable? They "know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ."

Their unbelief is utterly without excuse. Not because God has not fully and clearly revealed His purposes of mercy. Not because He has left Himself without witnesses of His saving power and love. Bethlehem and Calvary rise from the past to rebuke this faithless distrust of our heavenly Father's love. There is enough to quicken the feeblest faith into invincible strength in the question of the Apostle of the Gentiles, "He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?"

Not less desirable and necessary are those graces of holiness, of which faith is the parent and precursor. We need a more burning zeal in the work of our Divine Master. If the zeal of Christians be languid, it cannot resist the opposition and discouragement of the world. With the strong, natural tendency "to think of himself more highly than he ought to think," the Christian needs grace to "walk humbly with God." He needs the patient charity, that "endureth all things." He needs "the joy of salvation" to brighten the darkness of his earthly pilgrimage.

VIII.

I have already spoken of weak and inconsistent Christians of different types. The existence of such a class will hardly be questioned. But as a low degree of spiritual life causes the existence of a numerous class of Christians, whose religion does not yield them strength to resist the temptations of the world, the same cause accounts for the large number of nominal Christians whose religion affords them neither peace nor joy. They are themselves constantly in doubt whether they belong to Christ or the world. They question the possibility of possessing an assurance of Divine forgiveness and adoption. Clouds so constantly obscure the sun, that they doubt whether there is any sun or not. They know nothing, experimentally, of the joyful hope of eternal life; because they have never been freed from uncertainty whether they have passed from death unto life. The absence of assurance causes absence of joy. Thus thousands of worldly and inconsistent Christians are living without the assurance of acceptance with God. This want is their weakness.

It will scarcely be argued by any one, that for Christians to live without an assurance of God's favor, and consequently without joy and peace

through believing, is a better, or more desirable condition, than to be able to adopt the Apostle's words: "For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." It is sometimes said, that a faith which endures without feeling, in spite of darkness, must be stronger than that which is strengthened by the swell of joyful emotion. But it may be questioned whether a firm and strong conviction of the truth of the doctrines of the Gospel can exist, without making some impression upon the sensibilities. All that we know of the connection between faith and feeling, in ordinary life, would lead us to doubt whether such a thing can be. The belief of good news begets gladness. The belief of evil news causes sorrow. The same principle must hold good in relation to spiritual truths and interests. Unquestionably, some natures are more impressionable and excitable than others. But it is not reasonable to think that a penitent sinner can fully and trustingly accept the "glad tidings of great joy," and feel no emotion of grateful gladness for this unspeakable gift. Nor can it be seriously maintained, that those who walk in the light of God's countenance, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God, are not stronger

to resist temptation and perform the duties of life, than those whose faith is weak, and with whom "the consolations of God" are small. The trusting, hopeful, joyous Christian is less likely to be charmed by the baits of sinful pleasure, than one who finds no enjoyment in God's service, and who does his work merely from a sense of duty. The Word of God declares: "The joy of the Lord is your strength." The possession of a conviction that he is for Christ's sake graciously forgiven, and adopted into God's family, gives a Christian decision and consistency of character. For he who realizes his position as a child of God, must feel motives to obedience, that cannot be felt by those who do not know whether they are Christians or not. It quickens active zeal, increases joy, and promotes growth in holiness.

Doubtless, it is a serious mistake to make ebullitions of feeling the test of experience or character. God's disposition towards men does not change with every change in their feelings. It is unwise to let faith depend upon the emotions, instead of on the Word of God. It must be confessed, that those who display the most feeling are not always the most consistent, in matters of principle. I would not assume that none but those who are strong in faith, and full of joy, are Christians. Faith may

be feeble, and yet be genuine. Nevertheless, it is very desirable that every Christian should have that kind of religion, which gives peace and consolation. The parting benediction of Christ to His disciples was "peace;" and the religion that does not give peace to the troubled conscience, is not the religion of the New Testament; for the Apostle tells us, that this kingdom of God within us is not forms and observances; but "righteousness and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost." As soon as the mind awakens from its natural sleep, to form any just conception of God's power, and of the dependence of all creatures upon His bounty, it becomes profoundly interesting to know what is His relation to us, and His disposition towards us. Is He for us or against us? Is He angry or pleased with us? Are we the objects of His approval or of His condemnation? If His favor is life, and His frown is death, it cannot be that rational beings can be willing to spend life in dark uncertainty, whether His thoughts towards them are peace and favor, or wrath and condemnation.

It is evident, from the scriptural testimony I have already quoted, that the knowledge of salvation is not some special experience, bestowed only upon chosen vessels, or eminent Christians; but is designed

in the economy of grace to be the privilege of all God's children. Christians should not settle a great practical question like this, by adopting a theory that is the offspring of some faithless, desponding mood of feeling. Our appeal must be to the written Word. If we go back to the apostolic times, we learn that those who were "justified by faith" had "peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ." They "rejoiced with joy unspeakable and full of glory." We read, that "the disciples were filled with joy and with the Holy Ghost." St. Paul says: "Now, we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God." St. John says: "Hereby know we that we dwell in Him, and He in us, because He hath given us of His Spirit." "He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself." Even in the Old Testament, we have clear and ample testimony, that those who, like Enoch, walked with God, like him had the testimony that they pleased God. The book of Psalms abounds with expressions of joyful confidence in God. Those old Jewish saints "served the Lord with gladness." Their religion was full of praise and rejoicing.

Is there any reason to conclude that God's pur-

poses, and His dealings with men, have so far changed, that the faith of true godliness has no longer the power to produce similar results, to what religion produced in the primitive Church, and under the Jewish dispensation? It may seem trifling to ask such a question. Yet, there is a large number of Christians, who appear to think that this is really the case. They speak and live as if such an assurance of adoption, as produces joyous confidence in God, was not at all to be expected now. It will not be questioned that God is able to convey this assurance to the soul; and to do so is in harmony with all that is revealed respecting His character. We have the same Gospel, without any diminution of power or adaptation. We have the same Holy Spirit, still mighty to enlighten, renew, and sanctify. There is no Divine curtailment of Christian privilege. There is no change in the charter of Redemption. It is as true now, as in the days of the Apostles, that "God is no respecter of persons. In every nation, he that feareth Him and worketh righteousness, is accepted with Him." We have the same Almighty Saviour, "full of grace and truth"—"Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, to-day, and forever."

It is forcibly said, by Rev. W. Arthur: "It is trifling at once with a man's common sense, and with

his most sacred hopes and fears, to tell him that he is called with the same calling as the early believers, by the voice of the same Redeemer, under the same covenant of grace, and with the same promise of adoption; but that, while his brother, ages ago, had "peace with God," and "joy unspeakable and full of glory," knew himself a child, and then an heir of God, and daily felt that heaven was his home, he is to proceed on his pilgrimage, without any of these comforts; and learn at the end whether, or not, his soul is to perish. Who has given any man the right to assert that such a change has taken place, in the relation of the adopting Father to His adopted children, affirming Him to have grown, in our age, too indifferent to soothe their hearts, and make them partakers of the joy which He spreads among the angels when He declares that the lost is found?"

But the facts of modern Christian experience evince that there is no such limitation, or depreciation of privilege, as the faithless fears and shallow conceptions of some lukewarm Christians have led them to imagine. There are thousands of living witnesses, in all sections of the Christian Church, who know by blessed personal experience, that "the Son of Man has power on earth to forgive sins." They can adopt, as their own, the language of David: "I

waited patiently for the Lord ; and He inclined unto me, and heard my cry. He brought me up also out of an horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock, and established my goings. And He hath put a new song in my mouth, even praise unto our God." Still, as in the days of Paul, the gospel of Christ "is the power of God unto salvation, to every one that believeth."

IX.

Not only have there been in all ages noble examples of consistent godliness, triumphant faith, and unselfish consecration to the service of Christ, which should inspire the confidence of believers who are, like Gideon's host, "faint, yet pursuing;" but there are many instructive examples of Christian workers passing from a lower state of grace, to a higher and fuller experience of God's power to save. This clothed them with greater spiritual influence, and crowned them with grander successes in the work of Christ. There have been men and women, who seemed to be sent into the world, on purpose to manifest the sufficiency of the grace of Christ to lift up fallen and corrupt humanity into a condition of moral purity and unselfish benevolence, that had more of heaven than earth in it.

Who has not wondered at the heroic courage and patient endurance of Luther? This inner life of faith was the secret of his strength. It was some time after he had been converted from the errors of Rome, and had experienced much blessing from the study of God's Word, that on Pilate's staircase at Rome, there came to his heart, like a flash of light from heaven, the words, "the just shall live by faith." "Then," he says, "I felt myself born again as a new man; and I entered by an open door into the very Paradise of God. From that hour I saw the precious and holy Scriptures with new eyes. I went through the whole Bible. I collected a number of passages which taught me what the work of God was. Truly, this text of St. Paul was to me the very gate of heaven." An inner victory must always precede the outward victory. Every true disciple of Christ can say with the Master, "I have meat to eat that ye know not of."

"When one who holds communion with the skies
Has filled his urn where the pure waters rise,
And once more mingles with us meaner things,
'Tis even as if an angel shook his wings;
Immortal fragrance fills the circuit wide,
And tells us whence his treasures are supplied."

President Edwards tells us how he received a baptism of the Spirit, which inaugurated a new era

in his life. It came upon him in the form of a revelation of the glory of Christ and His wonderful mediatorial work. Speaking of the effect of this baptism of power from on high, he says: "I had an ardency of soul to be, what I know not otherwise how to express, emptied and annihilated, to lie in the dust and to be filled with Christ alone, to love Him with a holy and pure love, to trust in Him, to live upon Him, and to be perfectly sanctified, and made pure with a divine and heavenly purity." When we read such a description of his spiritual state, we no longer wonder that his preaching stirred the people like a voice from heaven.

John Wesley was, in the early years of his ministry, a man of a most devout spirit, distinguished by the most self-sacrificing zeal in every good work. He fasted and prayed and labored, to the utmost limit of his strength. Yet, little or no fruit appeared from these early labors. He came out from England as a missionary to Georgia; but his mission was a failure. He returned to England disappointed and discouraged. Shortly afterward he entered into full spiritual liberty; and from that time forward was a new man. The baptism of Pentecost, which transformed Peter, the cowardly denier, into Peter, the heroic confessor, was scarcely more marked in its

results on the man, than the change which transformed Wesley, the ascetic ritualist, into Wesley, the apostle of justification by faith and full salvation.

Many other similar illustrations of the same truth might easily be given. Even in the Church of Rome, in spite of its errors concerning the faith, there have been many striking examples of personal consecration and holy living, which teach us that God's grace can work mightily in circumstances which might be deemed unfavorable. Such persons as Tauler, Fenelon, Archbishop of Cambray, and Madame Guion, were remarkable examples of sanctifying grace, and deep communion with God. It is impossible to read the records of their experience without feeling that, whatever may have been their errors of opinion, their hearts followed hard after God.

Madame Guion was bitterly persecuted on account of her religious faith, being many years confined in the Bastille, and other French prisons. Yet, she bore all in a spirit of patient submission, such as nothing but the strength received in communion with God could have supplied. The woman who, while unjustly imprisoned in a dungeon, breathed out her soul in such words of joyful resignation as we find in the beautiful little poem, from which we quote one verse, must have had access to a source of con-

solation and strength, of which the world knows not :

A little bird I am,
Shut out from fields of air,
And in my cage I sit and sing
To Him who placed me there ;
Well pleased a prisoner to be,
Because, my God, it pleases Thee.

I cannot pause here to reply to the objection of those who say this doctrine of Christian holiness has an element of mystery about it, that should cause it to be received with caution. Doubtless, it is "a great mystery." If any teaching respecting the communion of the spirit of man with the infinite Creator, and the reception of Divine light and strength for human ignorance and weakness, had not an element of mystery in it, it would be presumptive evidence that it was not true.

Christian reader, do not cavil about terms or theories. Rest not without possessing the thing signified by "Scriptural Holiness." It will unscale your eyes to behold glorious visions of Christ's love and power. It will nerve you with heavenly fortitude to resist the temptations of the world. It will bathe your life-pilgrimage in the sunshine of heavenly joy. It will bring your wayward life into harmony with the will of God. It will make you a braver witness, and a more successful worker for Christ in the world.

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VII.

Practical Motives and Considerations.

Rise ! for the day is passing ;
The sound that you scarcely hear
Is the enemy marching to battle ;
Arise ! for the foe is here !
Stay not to sharpen your weapons,
Or the hour will strike at last,
When, from dreams of a coming battle,
You wake to find it past.

MISS PROCTER.

Let not your exertions end in tears ; mere weeping will do nothing without action. Get on your feet, ye that have voices and might go forth and preach the Gospel ; ye that have wealth, go forth and spend it for the poor and needy, and sick and dying. Ye that have time, go forth and spend it in deeds of goodness ; ye that have power in prayer, go forth and pray ; ye that can handle the pen, go forth and write down iniquity,—every one to his post ; every one of you to your gun in this day of battle ; now for God and for His truth ; for God and for the right. Let every one of us who knows the Lord seek to fight under His banner.

SPURGEON.



CHAPTER VII.

PRACTICAL MOTIVES AND CONSIDERATIONS.

I.

THE Holy Scriptures clearly teach, that all Christians are accountable to God for the use they make of their power to influence others. All the elements of influence which we possess are gifts from God, which we are to use for the promotion of His glory. The wealth which industry acquires ; the knowledge and mental force by which mind impresses mind ; the influence which character or social position gives us, are all talents to be wisely and faithfully used. They cannot be wasted for mere selfish gratification, without bringing upon the soul guilt and condemnation. This is forcibly taught in the parable of the rich man and Lazarus. The rich man is condemned, not for any flagrant wickedness, but for failing to use the gifts with which he

was entrusted in the way that God required. The same weighty lesson is impressively taught in the parable of the talents. Those servants that improved what was committed to them were honored and rewarded; but the slothful servant, who did not improve his talent, was "cast into outer darkness." "To him that knoweth to do good and doeth it not, to him it is sin." It is evident that to pervert, or misuse our power to do good in the world, is not regarded in God's sight as a trifling thing. It is enough to cause the ruin of the soul, and bring down upon the slothful and selfish the heaviest punishment of Divine wrath.

Not only is every Christian responsible for the faithful use of every power which he possesses, he is bound to guard against everything that lessens his influence, and to use all legitimate means to strengthen it. He is accountable for the power which he might have attained. It is not enough that we do not waste our talents. If God places within our reach powers of usefulness, and teaches us the means by which they may be obtained, and we by our neglect fail to secure these gifts, we shall be condemned for our failure. We are held accountable for the good we might have done, but have left undone, because we were disqualified to do

it in consequence of our own slothful neglect. This god-like power of doing good is one of our grandest distinctions. Neglect to guard and improve their moral influence causes many Christians to be sickly dwarfs, when they might be giants in spiritual strength. If we carefully shun whatever injures bodily health, or enfeebles our strength, we should not less sedulously avoid everything that enfeebles the moral energy of the soul, or injures the influence of our example. To lose force of character, or wholesomeness of influence, is to lose what is more precious than gold or rubies.

When St. Paul says, "all things are lawful for me, but all things are not expedient," he teaches us that the children of God are to live under the law of unselfish Christian expediency. They are not merely to consider whether any course of action is allowable. They must duly weigh its probable effect upon others. They are bound to consider how it will affect, even the weak brethren. There are things which a Christian might do without any sense of condemnation, from which it becomes his duty to abstain, when he has reason to believe that his doing these things would be injurious to others. This is the principle laid down by the Apostle Paul when he says: "It is good neither to eat flesh, nor to drink

wine, nor anything whereby thy brother stumbleth, or is offended, or is made weak." Or, as he says to the Philippians, we are to "look not every man upon his own things, but every man also on the things of others." We are not to live as if there were none in the world to be considered but ourselves. There must, of course, be a rational interpretation of this rule. A Christian is not to refrain from doing what he believes to be right, merely because some unreasonable people may make his course a pretext for being offended and doing wrong. Otherwise a Christian might be deterred from doing what is laudable and right, by the threats of others to make his action a ground of offence. If people are foolish and wicked enough to do wrong, because some one else does what in his conscience he believes to be right, they must bear the blame of their own folly and sin.

II.

Remember, that the religious character which fails to exert a wholesome religious influence upon others, is not sufficient for yourself. You cannot be living in the enjoyment of God's favor, if you are living in the neglect of His work. If the stream be dried up, there must be failure at the fountain-head. If your religion fails to have any godly influence

upon others, it cannot have warmed and quickened your own heart. If it has not blossomed into a holy example, there must be some fatal want of life at the root. If the fruits of the Spirit do not adorn the life, the sanctification of the Spirit has not been wrought in the heart. They who break Christ's commandments cannot love Him supremely; and they who love not the Lord Jesus Christ are accused. After describing the fruits of the Holy Spirit in believing hearts, the Apostle Peter says: "If these things be in you and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ." Whatever may be his professed faith in creeds, "if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His." It would be an awful fate for those who have had a name to live, and a place in the visible Church in this world, at the last great day to hear the voice of the Judge, saying, "Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to Me."

III.

Consider how active and successful are evil agencies in luring souls into the paths of sin. If you saw a vessel crowded with hopeful passengers in imminent peril of being lured upon the reefs of

destruction, by the wrecker's false light, would it not prompt you to put forth every possible effort to warn and save them? But while you are excusing your indolence and selfishly asking, "Am I my brother's keeper?" thousands of hopeful spirits, out on life's dark and stormy ocean, are being lured by the world's false lights upon the rocks of perdition. Every inconsistent Christian is himself one of these misleading lights. While you pause and hesitate, they perish. When you yield to the allurements of the world, the light that is in you becomes darkness. A light-house keeper at Calais was once asked, "What if your light should go out?" The question seemed to startle him; and he said, "O, sir! it could not go out without great peril to some vessels. All hours of the night vessels are sailing past. And if this lamp was only to burn dimly, on any night, perhaps months after, from some distant place, I should hear of complaints, that on such a night the light in the Calais light-house burned dimly, and passing ships were in danger." Christian reader, remember, not vessels laden with earthly merchandise, but immortal spirits are sailing by your light; and if it be allowed to burn dimly—if your testimony for Christ be doubtful—your inconsistency may cause the wreck and ruin of those whom you love

most dearly. The apostles of infidelity are bending all their energies to disseminate their views. The votaries of a corrupt faith compass sea and land to make proselytes. The devotees of sensual pleasure are successfully spreading their nets for the feet of the unwary. A licentious press is corrupting the minds of the young with disbelief of Christian truth and false views of life. The followers of worldly fashion and folly are, on every hand, ensnaring the youth of our country. Mammon is holding up his glittering baits for the simple and sordid. Each year, as an advance column of drunkards sink into the grave, the ranks are filled up by a column of tipplers, whose places in turn are taken by a host of new recruits, largely from the youth of Christian families.

Such facts should arouse all true believers to more self-denying consecration. Christians should not so act as to give occasion for the allegation, that earthly considerations move men more powerfully than the grand motives which Christianity presents. Shall the love of money be mightier than the desire for the incorruptible riches? Shall the desire to corrupt and ruin the young be stronger than the desire to save them? Shall the favor of the world outweigh the friendship of God? Shall the

ephemeral pleasures of earth prove more attractive than the immortal joys of heaven? Should not the perversion and ruin, that are wrought out by evil agencies on every hand, prompt all lovers of the Lord Jesus Christ to seek the baptism of power from on high, that they may be qualified to counteract these evil agencies, and shield the young from the poisoned shafts of the destroyer?

IV.

Grateful love for "Him who hath loved them and washed them from their sins in His own blood" should impel all who have been raised from the death of sin to the life of righteousness, to "deny ungodliness and worldly lusts," and "live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world; looking for that blessed hope, and the appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for us that He might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto Himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works." The great Apostle of the Gentiles constantly refers to this sentiment, as the grand inspiring motive which lifted him and his co-workers above the world. If he urges the Church to strive together in their prayers to God for him, that he may be delivered from unreasonable men, and be

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successful in his ministry, his resistless plea is, "for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake." If he braves the reproach of men to declare the whole counsel of God, it is because "the love of Christ constraineth" him. If he is willing to be accounted a fool by the world, it is "for Christ's sake." If he patiently labors as the servant of the churches, it is "for Jesus' sake." When he urges the Corinthians to self-denying liberality, his most powerful argument is, "ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye, through his poverty, might be rich."

We test the value of all earthly professions of affection by what is willingly endured for the object of the love professed. The love that does not prove its truth by self-denial and suffering, is not worthy of the name. If there was an earthly friend who, at great personal sacrifice, had, in some time of want or peril, relieved our need and rescued us from danger, we would despise ourselves, if we should selfishly fail to recognize our debt of gratitude to such an one, when there was any suitable opportunity of doing so. We love the Royal Singer of Israel all the more, because, long after the brave and true-hearted Jonathan had died upon the bloody battlefield of Mount Gilboa and slept with his fathers, he

dealt tenderly with his poor lame son, Mephibosheth, for the sake of the memory of the beloved friend of his youth. But the motive that inspired Paul to such heroic self-denial, and which should inspire every disciple of Christ to walk worthy of the vocation wherewith he is called, is something that should be more potent than the memory of any earthly friend, however dear. It is for the sake of "a friend that sticketh closer than a brother." It is for the sake of Him, who died upon the cross of Calvary to redeem and save our guilty race, and who "ever liveth to make intercession for us"—for the sake of Him who, when we came as guilty sinners to His feet, freely forgave us, and adopted us into His family, filling our dark hearts with the joy of His salvation and the hope of eternal life. If Christians rightly apprehend all that is implied in this appeal, it should be all-powerful, in counteracting the temptations of the world. It brings us back in thought and feeling to that last night, in which He was betrayed; when He said to His sorrowing disciples: "DO THIS IN REMEMBRANCE OF ME." Not for the sake of any unworthy motive, are we admonished to "be not conformed to this world." Not for our own sakes, that we may have glory of men—not for the sake of the branch of the Church

to which we belong, that it may be prominent and influential among the churches. But for the sake of the great love wherewith Christ loved us—for the sake of the perishing world which He died to redeem—for the sake of His honor and glory, the spread of His kingdom and the triumphs of His cross, we should “in all our ways acknowledge Him,” knowing that in our fidelity and consistency in secular, as well as in sacred things, we “serve the Lord Christ.” Earthly and inferior motives are streams that become dry, as soon as the showers that occasion them have subsided; but the love of Christ is an unfailing fountain of inspiration, which grows deeper and stronger as it onward flows.

V.

All self-sacrifice for Christ will receive rich and ample compensation in the provisions of God's love. Conformity to the world, and every kind of recreancy to Christian duty, are prompted by a desire to gain some transient satisfaction. But whatever pleasure is renounced for Christ's sake gains, for those who make the renunciation, far purer and more enduring pleasure. There may be pain and suffering to bear; but “they that sow in tears shall reap in joy.” “If we suffer with Him, we shall also reign with Him.”

We may have fierce and prolonged battles to wage against the powers of darkness; but "in all these things, we are more than conquerors, through Him that loved us." Consistency may demand that you give freely of what God has given you, for the support of benevolent enterprises and the relief of human want, but even a cup of cold water, given for the sake of Christ, shall not lose its reward. Those who have responded to the claims of God's needy children, in the spirit of Christly charity, shall in the last great day hear with joy and wonder: "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these My brethren, ye have done it unto Me." Your fidelity to the voice of conscience may make your earthly path steep and thorny; but the path of the just "leads to the land where sorrow is unknown." You may have felt it, at the time, a painful sacrifice to relinquish some earthly amusement, or lose the friendship of some esteemed friend; but they, who overcome the world, shall be united in immortal friendship with "the general assembly of the Church of the first-born," and the holy angels who have never stained their immortality by transgression. Your Christian consistency may expose you to the reproach and opposition of those whose recreancy is rebuked by your fidelity; but all this is not worthy

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to be compared with the approving "well done!" of Christ the King; as He bids you welcome to the mansions He has prepared for His faithful servants. If it should be that conscientious honesty prevents you from accumulating the wealth, that a more unscrupulous course might have enabled you to obtain, and in consequence you are scorned for being poor,—if like Mary you have chosen the better part, you shall one day possess "an inheritance, incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you."

There may be loss and renunciation involved in serving Christ; but the gain is vastly greater than the loss. St. Paul says: "For we reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed in us." No mightier motive can be presented for seeking that faith and holiness, by which alone we can overcome the world and walk as children of light, than that which is contained in the Apostle's words to the Corinthians: "The things that are seen are temporal; but the things that are unseen are eternal." All that enslaves the soul and leads it away from God—all that allures, with deceitful promises of satisfying pleasure, to forget the Supreme Fountain of happiness, is temporal. All that the soul sacrifices, in

neglecting Christ and His salvation, and preferring selfish gratification, is eternal. The riches of earth shall soon pass from your grasp; and cannot free you from the condemnation of guilt, nor from sorrow and death, even while you possess them; but the riches that are "above what earth can grant," are laid up "where moth and rust doth not corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal."

The pleasures of earth are short-lived and unsatisfying; but the joys of the redeemed in heaven are as lasting as the throne of the eternal King. The favor and friendship of men are fickle and untrustworthy; but the mercy and truth of God are "from everlasting." Oh! if our faith were only strong enough "to climb where Moses stood," and view the promised rest in all its beauty and glory, the brightness of that vision, and the warmth of its rays, would melt the fetters of ice in which unbelief binds so many who have a name to live. If we could place our souls under the full influence of right apprehensions of its holy and blessed companionship—its songs of jarless harmony and exulting triumph—its complete freedom from sorrow, temptation, and care—its living fountains of pure unearthly joy—its willing and joyous service of love—its eternal re-union with the loved and lost of other days—its

glorious revelations of the sublime truths of God's moral government and character—its satisfying solutions of all the dark problems that perplexed and distressed us here—and its uninterrupted communion with the victorious Captain of our salvation, how would those low, earthly attractions, which now ensnare and darken the souls of so many Christians, lose their syren power to charm and mislead, and appear to the unscaled “eyes of the understanding,” in their real insignificance and sordidness! The inspired soul, filled with the hallowing joy of the heavenly vision, would rise on the wings of exultant faith, high above the mists and shadows which darken and bewilder faithless disciples, and summer in an atmosphere of unclouded transparency and unbroken peace; where all the din of earthly strife would be,

“Like harmless thunders breaking at his feet.”

The fact that to us the hope of such an exalted destiny is given—that we are called “to be partakers of the inheritance with the saints in light”—obligates us “to walk worthy of the vocation wherewith we are called;” and gives peculiar force to the admonition of the Apostle Peter: “Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of Him in peace, without spot and blameless.”

VI.

The dignity and honor of the position, to which God calls all who are witnesses for His faithfulness and love among men, lay upon every Christian a weighty personal obligation to "abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul;" and "by well-doing to put to silence the ignorance of foolish men." If a Christian man were appointed to represent his nation before foreign courts and potentates, on some important occasion, he would feel deeply his responsibility to acquit himself, in a way that would worthily represent his nation, and make no unfavorable impression respecting the beloved country that had committed her honor to his keeping. Every spark of manliness and patriotism in his nature would be kindled into flame, by an honorable ambition to show himself not unworthy of his high trust. Any one that could be indifferent, or neglectful of his duty, under such circumstances, would be something less than a man.

But far higher honor, and deeper responsibility, are laid upon the disciple of Christ in this sinful world. He is Christ's representative, among those who reject His authority. He has been lifted up "out of the horrible pit and miry clay" of his natural guilt and defilement, that he might glorify

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the God of his salvation. He has made known to His children the way of life, that they might guide others in the same path. Every blessing received has its corresponding obligation. This is distinctly implied in the language of St. Paul, in the second epistle to the Corinthians: "Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and the God of all comfort, who comforteth us in all our tribulation; that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God." Christian men and women! God commits the vindication of His character to you. He calls upon you to stand forth in the world as His faithful witnesses; to testify to those who are steeped in the blinding ignorance of sin, of His divine power and wisdom, faithfulness and love. You are to show, by brave and saintly lives, the sufficiency of His grace to change and purify the sinful hearts of men. To lift up the standards of heaven, amid the ungodliness and degeneracy of earth. By the blended testimony of the lips and the life, to compel those who come within the circle of your influence, to acknowledge the claims of their forgotten Father in heaven. To point souls smitten with the foul leprosy of sin to the great Healer, whose touch gives life.

A right apprehension of the peerless greatness, and eternal consequences of this work, would kindle in Christian hearts more ardent zeal in its prosecution; and intenser desire for the qualifications which it demands. It is not a small thing, to be the instrumental cause of an event that disappoints hell of its expectation, and kindles the rapture of the holy angels in heaven. "Let him know," says the Apostle James, "that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way, shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins." There is something wonderfully inspiring and suggestive in Paul's words to the Thessalonians: "But ye brethren, be not weary in well-doing." "YE BRETHREN"—YE who have been redeemed with the inestimably precious blood of Christ—YE who are stewards of the manifold gifts of God's grace—YE who are the honored standard-bearers of the risen Saviour—YE, whose minds have been enlightened to discern between things earthly and eternal; and who know what the Lord would have you to do—YE who are heirs to a heavenly inheritance, and expect to spend all eternity with those who have overcome the world, and rejected its ensnaring delusions—Oh! whatever others may do, "be YE steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord."

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CHRISTIANITY AND SKEPTICISM:

An Essay on Current Infidelity.

I.

THE WIDE-SPREAD PREVALENCE OF DOUBT AND DISBELIEF.

WE live in times when the Christian religion is most powerfully and persistently assailed, by objections and theories which are in direct antagonism to its fundamental truths. Though it cannot be denied that Christianity was never more successful, and potent for good in the world, than at the present day; yet, never were the attacks of infidelity so multiform, plausible, and wide-spread. As in military science the very strength of the defensive armor inspires the assailants to invent new methods of attack, so the success with which past objections have been answered by Christian apologists seems to have developed keener sagacity, and more plausible

methods, on the part of the apostles of unbelief. It would be neither wise nor correct to deny, that the advances of Atheistic materialism are serious and alarming. This progress of doubt and unbelief has not been by direct and open assault; but by a slow and steady undermining of the foundation principles of revealed religion. Writers who have professed high admiration for Christ and His religion, have openly maintained, or silently assumed as true, theories respecting the claims of the Bible, the origin of life, the value of prayer, and the impossibility of miracles, that are utterly incompatible with the central doctrines of Christianity. They have professed warm admiration for what they have labored to destroy. In the same breath in which they have said, "Hail, Master," and kissed Him, they have betrayed and dethroned Him. We are asked constantly to reconcile Christianity with modern culture, by renouncing all that is essential and characteristic of religion; and yet those who make these proposals claim to be the friends of religion. These professions of respect for Christ, and complimentary references to the Gospels, have masked the progress of the insidious foe, and lulled the suspicions of many Christians, who have not recognized the enemies of the Cross of Christ, under their modern deceptive names.

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But it cannot help the cause of religion to conceal, or ignore, the real facts. There is a fierce and mighty conflict going on between the opponents and defenders of Christianity. The matter at issue between these conflicting hosts is not the possession of some outpost, or redoubt; but the very citadel of truth itself. It is not whether a particular Christian doctrine is true or not; but whether there is any human soul, any God, or any future state at all. The assailing army of unbelief repudiates all teaching that implies any supernatural power, or spiritual existence whatever. This open denial of essential truths is one of the most alarming features of the infidelity of our times. There are some Christians who are so ignorant of this feature of modern unbelief, that they still confidently affirm, that Butler's "Analogy" is an unanswerable reply to the modern skeptical theories of the origin of the world. But, assuredly, that profound and acute reply to the objections of the Deists of the last century, against revealed religion, does not confute the theories of modern Atheism. Butler's argument simply is that the infidel objections urged against revealed religion may with equal force be urged against the Author of Nature. This reply is unanswerable against Deists, who hold the doctrine of a Supreme Ruler

and Creator of the universe; but it is unavailing against those who explicitly deny that the world is the product of an intelligent Mind, or that there is anything in the universe except the products of the forces of matter. The type of Deism, that was represented by English infidelity in the last century, can be scarcely said to have an existence in our day, unless it be among the Broad Church Rationalists and Unitarians.

It has been frequently remarked that modern infidelity has presented a striking contrast to the coarse ribaldry of Voltaire and Paine, in its courteous and respectful tone towards the religion of the Bible. But this state of things is rapidly passing away. The mask is now very commonly taken off. It seems as if the work of undermining and laying the train has been proceeding stealthily for a long period. Now, they think the time has come for applying the match. There is indeed no cessation in the publication of plausible and pretentious speculations, which indirectly assail Christianity and ignore its claims. There is no abatement in the advocacy of theories of the origin of life, which deny the existence of a living personal God whose tender mercies are over all His works; but there is a more outspoken avowal of anti-Christian sentiments, and more bitter

and destructive assaults on the fundamental truths of religion. We find this poison of infidelity in the popular novel, which works out its theories of life and character without any recognition of God's existence or providence; in the deliverances of public lecturers, who boldly sneer at the precious treasures of Christian faith;—and in the elegant magazine, designed for the amusement and instruction of the cultivated classes, we are often introduced to a world in which God reigns not. But the attack is no longer confined to insinuations and plausible speculations, which silently promote doubts of the reality of religion. The chief modern expounders of science magnify the all-sufficiency of matter, and ridicule as fetichism the idea that thought and design imply a thinker and designer. Even men who claim to be dealing with purely scientific matters are now frequently seen turning aside from their researches respecting the facts of nature, to assail Christianity as the enemy of progress and a tissue of superstitious fancies.

The Rev. Joseph Cook recently stated that within the last two years 22,000 copies of Paine's "Age of Reason" were circulated in New England alone. There are infidel propagation societies, as well as societies for the propagation of the gospel. In some

of the Western States, infidelity is rampant; and its advocates are defiant and aggressive. No doubt these grosser forms of infidelity are more common in the United States than in Canada. But whatever prevails there is sure to soon find its way to this country. Already infidel lecturers from the States have visited Canada. A band of Atheistic writers have commenced a periodical for the publication of their anti-religious views in Toronto; and in the daily papers, and other periodicals, we see occasionally views far more lax and anti-Christian, than we were accustomed to meet in former times in the productions of the press. The fact that the most blatant denouncers of Christianity find, in many places, large and sympathizing audiences, must also be regarded as additional evidence of a tendency to unbelief and infidelity, which all Christians must deeply deplore. In many quarters, the deliverance from the restraints and obligations of Christian truth, which the theories of infidelity promise to those who accept them, is hailed with ill-disguised satisfaction as an emancipation.

Nor is this tendency to disbelief of religious truth confined to the ignorant and vicious alone. It cannot be denied, that a very large proportion of the leading names in current literature and science must

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be classed with those who are hostile, or indifferent, to religion. Many of the pens, which are supplying the most popular and influential literature of the day, are not wielded under the inspiration of any deep conviction of the reality and importance of the spiritual and religious side of human nature. Men who are highly honored for their proficiency in science, as well as respected for their integrity of character, maintain theories which practically deny the existence of the God of Creation and Providence; and all those fundamental truths which are the basis of moral obligation, and the inspiration of all benevolent effort. Doubt and disbelief are applauded as evidences of superior mental strength and intelligence; and faith in the doctrines of Christianity stigmatized, as a symptom of weakness and subserviency to priestly authority. And, what is still more surprising, within the Church itself, in many instances, the appointed expounders and defenders of religious truth have adopted and propagated theories that, at one time, would have been regarded as infidel speculations, utterly inconsistent with the historic faith of the Christian Church. Then, there is in all countries a large class which, without any intelligent comprehension of the questions in debate, or the arguments by which they are supported, is always

ready to accept and re-echo any teaching, which tends to break down the restraints and obligations which fixed religious principles impose. By this class the anti-Christian speculations of skeptical thinkers are repeated, and promulgated as indisputable facts, which it is a sign of superstition and extreme conservatism to deny. Crude and unproved theories are often, by this means, caused to govern and control the belief and conduct of thousands, who are much more influenced by a congenial sympathy with the speculations, than by any convincing proofs of their truth.

One result of this prevalence of theories of creation and life, not in harmony with the Gospel of Christ, is that a considerable proportion of many Christian congregations are so far tainted with doubt and skepticism, as to be disposed to receive with favor any teaching that professes to offer larger freedom of thought, and to require less submission to authority. In Europe, this breach between modern culture and devout faith is even more marked than in America. But the waves of European disbelief are already breaking upon our shores; and, when this age of intense practical activity is succeeded by an age of reflection and dissective criticism, we may expect similar results. An eminent German divine

says of Germany: "In the towns, whether you visit the lecture-rooms of professors, or the council-chamber of the municipality, or the barrack of the soldier, or the work-shop of the artizan,—everywhere, in all places of private or social gathering, you hear the same tale: 'The old faith is now obsolete; modern science renders all genuine belief in it now impossible; only ignoramuses and hypocrites profess to adhere to it any longer.' Still more is this the case among the educated and half-educated classes—that is among the town populations—of Roman Catholic countries. France, the greatest of them, has never recovered from her radical breach with Christianity in 1793, when bishops and priests united in the abjuration of their former faith. It is well known that in Upper and Central Italy, the great majority of educated persons have not only silently broken with their Church, but openly avow their unbelief. In Roman Catholic communities, infidel publications enjoy much more splendid triumphs than any which await them in the domains of Protestantism. For hundreds who read Strauss in Germany, tens of thousands in France and Italy have been seen devouring Renan." So widespread is this rejection of religious faith, in parts of Germany, that Dr. Christlieb, the writer just quoted, says that,

not long ago, it was discovered in a Prussian gymnasium, that a secret society existed among the boys of from thirteen to fifteen years of age, with rules of a purely Atheistic character, the first paragraph commencing, "Any one believing in a God is thereby excluded from this society!" It is not necessary to comment on the state of things which such a deplorable fact indicates. Some degree of reaction, from the open unbelief of the Church of the past generation in Germany, has taken place; but destructive philosophy, negation, and disbelief, still extensively prevail in that country.

The state of things in Britain, though by no means so bad as on the continent, is nevertheless sufficiently dark to awaken serious concern and dissatisfaction. It would be easy to name a good many writers, who occupy a leading position in literature and science, whose influence is hostile to religious faith, and in favor of the Atheistic materialism, which has no place in its philosophy for the fundamental truth that "the Lord reigneth." It may be thought by some, that these theories are in too high and speculative a region of thought to affect the belief, or character, of the common people. But this is not so. A theory is never very long broached by scholars and thinkers, before it is served up in some

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popular form for the ignorant and unreflecting masses of the population. These interpreters of the higher class of skeptical writers generally present the worst points in the systems they undertake to expound, without important modifying and restraining considerations, by which the more questionable theories were rendered comparatively innocuous, in the more subtle and intellectual forms, in which they were at first presented. A mere theory, which was only capable of being applied to weaken the sense of moral or religious obligation, in its scientific or philosophic form, is often presented to the common people as an established fact, which justifies moral indifference, or the rejection of Christian faith. In other words, the scientific speculations tending to obscure the existence and work of God, which may be propounded by men of high moral and intellectual culture, are often transmuted into gross practical Atheism, in the thoughts and lives of those who are eagerly seeking some justification for their neglect of God's claims upon them. This truth is sadly illustrated in the case of the large numbers of English workingmen, and workers in factories, who habitually neglect religious worship, and question the truth of Christianity itself. In some of the populous towns of England, there is a large proportion of the popula-

tion, sunk in practical Atheism, living "without God in the world."

The extent to which the press is used, as a means of propagating anti-Christian sentiments, is another significant sign of the prevalence of infidelity. This agency has greatly extended its power as an educating agency in our day. It occupies the foremost place in determining and directing the currents of human thought, on all the great living questions that occupy the minds of men. While we thankfully acknowledge the valuable aid the press has given to religion and social progress, we cannot deny that it is also widely used to spread immoral and irreligious views of duty and character among the people. Over twenty years ago it was calculated that above 12,000,000 copies of infidel publications of various kinds were annually issued from the London press—640,000 being purely Atheistic, small pamphlets included, without reckoning newspapers. To these must be added an enormous number of immoral publications, which the *Edinburgh Review* estimated at 29,000,000 annually—making a larger aggregate than all the publications of the Bible, Tract, and many other religious societies put together. It will be seen from these facts that infidelity has its high class literature of speculation and scientific preten-

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sion for the cultivated and refined, and its low and popular teaching for the common people, who have a strong prejudice against authority and restriction.

The prevalence of this doubt and disbelief, respecting religious truth, among all classes of society, powerfully counteracts the influence of the preaching of the gospel by Christian ministers, just as a subtle poison working in the blood prevents the natural effect of wholesome food. Many a faithful preacher who proclaims, from week to week, the unsearchable riches of Christ, to audiences which give no sign of being impressed and transformed by the sanctifying truths preached, wonders at the obduracy of his hearers, and the apparent failure of his ministry, without discovering the true cause of this discouraging state of things. In very many cases the modern herald of Christ is like his Master at Nazareth—he cannot be the instrument of many mighty works of spiritual healing, because of the secret, obstinate unbelief of the people. In former times preachers thundered forth the threatenings of God's law against sinners, who, although far gone from the way of life, did not question the truth of his teaching. But, in our day, men use the theories of Atheistic philosophy as lightning rods to ward off the thunderbolts of Heaven. Not only is

the love of sin enthroned in the heart, excluding God from his rightful place and homage, but men strengthen themselves in their wicked indifference, or guilty rejection of God's claims, by pleading views of creation and life which deny that there is a personal Creator and sovereign, to whom love and allegiance are due from His intelligent creatures.

II.

SOME OF THE MAIN CAUSES OF THE PREVAILING SKEPTICISM OF THE TIMES.

It would be impossible, in this brief essay, to enumerate and describe the various causes which have promoted this wide-spread unbelief among all classes of society. Only a few of the more prominent of these can be mentioned.

1. *Among the chief causes of the prevalent infidelity, of every period, must be always reckoned the depraved moral condition of the human mind itself, which begets a strong tendency to reject truths that brand with Divine condemnation the cherished idols of sinful hearts. It is this perverted condition of the spiritual nature which gives power to all other causes. A recent writer in opposition to Christian truth makes the statement, that theologians have given up the plea that unbelief of the principles of*

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religion results from natural depravity; and he assumes, therefore, that the skepticism of the day is produced by attested truths of science. I am not prepared to make any such admission. I freely admit, that many skeptics are sincere in their disbelief of the truths of Christianity; that they may believe the views and reasonings, which have led them to adopt their skeptical conclusions, to be right. Some at least, are not consciously and wilfully rejecting what they know to be true. And it is not allowable to answer any fair and courteous objection, by a reference to the assumed moral perversity of the objector; instead of fairly meeting him on his own ground, by disproving his incorrect assumptions, and pointing out the fallacious character of his arguments. Dogmatically presuming that we have the true light, and that all who differ from us are in darkness, is a course that is not likely to make many converts to our belief.

Yet, it is indisputable that the relation men sustain to any subject powerfully affects their conclusions respecting it; and makes them slow to accept the full import of unpalatable opposing facts. In all matters, where personal interests are affected, prejudice, or partial feeling, comes into play in moulding human opinions. The ordinary differences of opin-

ion, which prevail between people, are caused more by difference of feeling, than by difference of intelligence respecting the facts on which their judgment is based. Even with respect to the ordinary facts of life, there are mental conditions which disqualify for the discovery of truth, or the work of drawing right deductions. In matters of art and beauty, there must be a cultivated taste. In matters of science, there must be knowledge. In questions relating to human conduct, there must be impartiality. If these conditions be wanting, the conclusions arrived at will be incorrect and worthless. But all these causes come into action, in the study of religious truths, which are "spiritually discerned." There is not merely a want of sympathy with truths which condemn the whole life, there is a latent desire and hope that they may be shown to be untrue. We have had a remarkable illustration of this, in the effect on the popular mind of the recent discussion of the doctrine of eternal punishment. The unguarded, declamatory assertions of Canon Farrar, and some others, awakened a very wide-spread response. No new light has really been cast upon the great theme. Nothing has been added to what is known to all theologians; yet the denunciations of hell and future punishment have been hailed, by a large

number, as condemned prisoners might receive a general amnesty. Any theology that offers the hope of freedom from the consequences of sin is popular, with a large number of people, for the same reason that the Irishman liked the United States, and advised his friend to come to it,—because there was “no hangin’ for stealin’.” To such, the denial of the truth of the Scripture threatenings of punishment against sinners, yields a feeling of satisfaction for deliverance from apprehended danger in the future.

The connection between moral depravity and unbelief of religious truth is well stated by Prof. Halstead, in “The Future Policy of America,” in the following words: “There is in the human heart an alienation of thought and purpose from the purity of the doctrines, and from the burden of the Divine precepts. Under such a condition of things, it is very easy for men to grow up with adverse prejudices and predispositions on the side of unbelief. It takes the natural depravity of both mind and heart to suggest the impossibility of a revelation from God, or to cause the intelligence to stagger at its strangeness. An inner alienation of disposition and sympathy often leads men to seek satisfaction in other systems of belief. It is no surprise, under the circumstances, that men should turn back from

a revelation which makes the native propensities of the human heart so uncomfortable with themselves, and which is calculated to probe afresh the depraved wound of sixty centuries. It is not strange that there should be some resentment to a system of laws, which criminates man in his history and threatens him for the future. It is to be expected that men should rush into the leniency of Pantheism, because nature does not awaken so vividly those immortal forebodings of the unquenched fire and the undying worm. It is no surprise that there should be apostles of materialism; because it takes the soul out of the body and divests it of responsibility. Man is so intensely earthly, in his disposition and character, that it becomes very easy for him to disbelieve the plainest truths of the spiritual world. The inherent tendency of sin is to open rejection of the Divine authority. The passions and the lusts and the appetites of man are the abettors of unbelief." We will not go so far as to say that every unbeliever, who repudiates the authority of the Bible, does so to remove its moral restrictions from his life; yet there is little room to doubt, that the propensities and characteristics of unconverted and sinful men create a strong tendency to reject the truth and authority of the Holy Scriptures.

2. *The circumstance, that most men are constantly associated in thought and action with the visible and tangible, renders the apprehension and belief of spiritual truths difficult to such.* Men speak of the material as the real, and of the spiritual as the unreal. The step from this to the complete rejection of all spiritual truth is not far. Imagination is not religion; yet a person of an idealistic and intellectual mind is more likely to accept spiritual truths than one who is of a narrow, matter-of-fact, and sordid nature. The man whose whole life is spent in one locality, moving constantly in the same monotonous rounds, has but a faint conception of distant countries; while he who has visited them, or informed himself respecting their peculiarities, has a vivid impression of their reality. So, to those who only mind earthly things, all that relates to a spiritual world and immortal existence soon seems like a misty dream; and they become ready to receive, with little questioning, theories that are congenial to their spiritual indifference and earthliness.

3. *With a large class, this tendency to reject spiritual truths is greatly heightened, by an exclusive devotion to the study of the phenomena of the physical world.* The great discoveries made in this department of thought, and the practical interest with

which many of them are invested, have made this field of investigation peculiarly absorbing to those who have entered it. By these devotees to the study of the material, mental science is neglected and disparaged, as mazy speculations from which no practical benefits can result. Many scientific men have become so devotedly consecrated to the investigation of the material world, that they have ceased to recognize the radical difference between inert matter, and free, intelligent mind; and maintain that they are governed by the same laws. Indeed, they go even farther than this, and declare that there is nothing in the universe, but matter and its results. From denying the existence of a human soul, they soon advance to deny the existence of the Father Soul of the universe. Intense concentration on one subject may make a man an adept in that branch of knowledge, but it has serious disadvantages. It narrows the range of a man's thoughts. It warps his judgment, by shutting out of sight important facts, which should be taken into account in order to arrive at safe conclusions. It may make the devotee of a particular science an authority in his department; but it largely disqualifies him to pass impartial judgment on other subjects. It is not strange, that men without any personal knowledge of spiritual

religion, to kindle strong faith in the Author of life, by fixing their whole thoughts on the mystic forces and wonderful transformations of matter, should become so fully filled with the thought of these forces, as to fancy there is no other power in existence. An exclusive devotion to religious and spiritual phenomena, which shuts out from the mind the facts of the order of nature, and the conditions which Heaven has made essential to the various kinds of success, tends to promote superstition. A good man, living such a life, may easily glide into the conception that everything is done by constant miraculous interposition. But, on the other hand, the constant and absorbing study of secondary causes tends to make a man forget the Great First Cause; and to disbelief in any influence outside of general phenomena. Exclusive devotion to materialistic science is the parent of much of our current infidelity. The mole, that burrows in the earth, knows nothing of the beauty which the sunlight reveals; neither does he who studies only the properties of material substances comprehend the grander phenomena of the moral and spiritual world.

A recent American writer pertinently remarks that "there is no surer, swifter way to warp a man's life and character, than to shut him up in his

chemical laboratory, with pick and retort, or with philosophical apparatus and telescope to calculate by sines and cosines, with no moral truth to move him, or no religious fire to warm his soul."—(*Halstead.*) All our faculties of mind and body are strengthened by use and enfeebled by disuse. The physical organ that is not used at all soon becomes incapable of use. It is in harmony with this natural law, that those who give themselves exclusively to the examination of the phenomena of matter, and the conditions under which its forces operate, while they greatly sharpen their powers of observation by these studies, seriously weaken and crush out those higher spiritual capacities, in which man's likeness to his Creator mainly consists; for by these alone we can rise to a true conception of the great spiritual verities, which unfold our relations to our Creator, His character, and our destiny. If this absorbing devotion to one branch of science leads men to belittle and neglect other branches of human knowledge, how much more is it likely to obscure the lustre of religious truths, the right apprehension of which requires a mind in moral harmony with them? I am not in these remarks condemning the study of physical science. All departments of God's works are worthy of our close and intelligent regard, because they reveal His

character. It is against an exclusive study of matter, while ignoring and denying the key truth which gives unity and meaning to all this vast creation, that I protest. It is only by a recognition of the Divine Intelligence that created all things, that their beauty, grandeur, and scientific order can be fully apprehended.

4. *The disquisitions of speculative philosophy* have, at all times, since the origin of Christianity more or less tended to mould the teaching of the Bible into forms in harmony with the current thought of the day. There is a natural selfish pride of intellect, which prompts men to place an unduly high value upon their own theories and conclusions; and, in consequence of this, they are disposed to bend and fashion other theories into harmony with their ideas; or, if this cannot be done, to repudiate what cannot be reconciled with their philosophy. Examples of this relation between free speculation and religious belief and unbelief, are thickly scattered over the past history of free thought in Christian countries. Gnosticism in the primitive Christian Church bore a striking resemblance to modern rationalism. The teachers of this philosophy explained Scripture teaching, and all outward things, by their intuitions, which they deemed the infallible standard of truth.

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The sensational philosophy of Hobbes, in the last century, and the materialistic philosophy of the present day go beyond the modification of the doctrines and precepts of Christianity; for, being essentially anti-theistic, they assume an attitude of open hostility to the fundamental truths of our holy religion. The revolt against every form of mental submission to authority, which specially distinguishes the present age, has greatly intensified this tendency. Not only is the authority of great names deemed insufficient, as a ground for accepting any view of truth; an appeal to such authority is almost enough to secure the repudiation of the most reasonable and logical conclusions. It cannot be denied that the spirit of free thought, which at the Reformation prompted the Protestant Reformers to reject the canonized heresies of the Church of Rome, has in its extreme modern forms developed a disposition to reject authority; and to indulge in reckless speculation, which has conduced to promote skeptical opinions. I do not say this in condemnation of free thought and discussion, as if they were not better than the stolid credulity and unreasoning submission to authority which they superseded; but the best things have such a possibility of evil in them, that some have maintained that all evil is an overgrowth

of good. The freedom of choice, with which our Maker has endowed us, while it raises us in the scale of being, at the same time, renders us capable of doing wrong, as well as of doing right. The free political institutions under which it is our happiness to live, imply political agitation and various minor evils and difficulties, which are not experienced under an absolute despotism. But that does not prove that a despotism is a better form of government. At the French Revolution, when the oppressive despotism of centuries was overthrown, in the reaction that followed, the wildest license and the most unjust cruelty were displayed, by a people intoxicated with the new sense of liberty. But these excesses do not prove that the evils and abuses which led to the Revolution should have been allowed to remain; or that political freedom is less desirable than political servitude. Rome, indeed, points to the erratic and anti-religious speculations of the present day, as the result of the Protestant principle of the right of private judgment; but so long as she has no remedy to offer us but to close our eyes, repress all freedom of thought, and accept with unquestioning credulity the baseless dogmas of erring men, we shall not feel much disposition to renounce our right to use the

faculties which God has given us, in order to find out what is truth.

But, while we firmly maintain the right of a free and impartial examination of the claims of all that has come down to us from the past, whether in philosophy, science, or theology, it cannot be denied that as political liberty has sometimes degenerated into reckless license, and the lawless tyranny of mob law, so may mental freedom drift into an egotistic independence, that may substitute its crude theories for rejected truths, whose evidences have never been fairly examined, and whose full import has never been fully grasped. Every man has certainly a right to think for himself. It does not follow, however, that a man has come to just conclusions, because he claims to have thought for himself. I cannot admit that every shallow sciolist is capable of grasping and solving the profound problems of the world of mind; nor that it is a sign of a superior intellect to be drifting through the fogs of speculation, without settled convictions respecting the great fundamental truths of religion. In Germany, many, of whom Strauss was a leading example, began with independent criticisms of some things in revealed religion, and ended in blank, rayless Atheism. This idea, that a rejection of the common faith is a sign of

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mental strength and independence, has caused many to do, under the influence of vanity and conceit, what more thorough intelligence and consistent modesty would have prevented. Every man, who has some doubtful teaching to propose, shouts lustily for freedom of thought, and denounces as bigots and persecutors all who question, or condemn, his theories. This antagonism to what is commonly accepted by others, by being taken by those who cherish it for an evidence of independence and mental strength, flatters their natural vanity, and strengthens their opposition to the popular belief. Many of this class begin, not by denying the truths of Christianity, but by disparaging the importance of doctrines and creeds, because they deem them restrictions on mental freedom. A cry for liberty of thought is almost always sure to awaken a sympathetic response ; though the design of those who make war on creeds is, almost always, to prepare the way for the repudiation of the truths which these creeds contain, and which they probably already disbelieve. The prevailing outcry against the importance of a belief of truth, the claim that religion is something wholly unconnected with such belief, and that churches have no right to maintain standards of doctrine, are all attempts to break down the standards of the faith,

and open the door for skeptical and unscriptural theories of human character and destiny. On this point, I may repeat here what I have said in another place: "The Christian Church maintains the standard of scriptural truth, because right convictions of vital truth are necessary to mould and inspire a right life. If men have false notions of their own character and God's character, of their duty and their destiny, their lives cannot be 'in the right.' A false belief may direct all life's energies to false issues. If a man does not believe that he is sinful and depraved, he will not seek for salvation. It is true, a profession of faith may be a mere formal thing; but a man's life is what his deepest convictions make it. We might as well expect blossoms and fruits without roots, as right character without right principles and beliefs. Good principles are the roots from which good deeds grow."—(*Spurious Catholicity.*)

5. *Nothing has so largely contributed to promote infidelity and unbelief, as the failure of the Christian Church to present a true representation of New Testament Christianity in the world.* The corruptions of doctrine, the inconsistencies of character, the misinterpretations of Scripture, the unscriptural pretensions put forth in the name of Christianity, and whatever has been unreasonable or unjust in the

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policy of any section of the Church, or in the conduct of any of the representatives of religion, have, in all ages, been eagerly seized as reasons for rejecting the truths and claims of Christianity. Of the bad effect produced on non-Christian observers, by nominal Christians who have not consistently exemplified the spirit of Christ in their lives, I have spoken at sufficient length in the previous chapters of this book. But other defective representations of the religion of Christ have also tended to promote and confirm unbelief and doubt.

The corruption of the Christian religion, by the Church of Rome, has greatly tended to promote skepticism, especially in countries where Romanism and the Christian religion were popularly regarded as identical. We need not wonder that the baseless pretensions of the clergy; the bitter and bloody persecutions, on account of religion, which have been sanctioned and carried out by the authorities of that Church; the despotic suppression of the right of independent thought; the childish and absurd fables for which belief has been claimed by ecclesiastical authority; and the unrelenting hostility to progress and reform, which Rome has constantly displayed, have led intelligent and independent enquirers after truth to despise the Christianity, that endorsed and

defended things so evidently false and wrong. It is well known that in France, Spain, and Italy the great bulk of the educated classes, have revolted against accepting the dogmas and extravagant pretensions of the Romish Church; and, knowing no purer form of Christianity, have by a natural reaction, lapsed into infidelity. The frequent political alliances of the Church with the despotic measures of princes and parties, who have disregarded the rights and interests of the people, have also created a strong prejudice against a religion which appeared to be identified with the upholding of some dominant class, and the oppression of the masses of the population. Every case, in which Christianity has been identified with any doubtful cause, or any particular political party, has wrought evil to the cause of religion. It has been truly said: "Christianity, or the Christian Church cannot be incorporated with a single party, without subjecting itself to the liability of sharing all the odium and mortifications, which in any political conflict that party may have to endure." Christ's kingdom is not of this world.

But it is not merely the unscriptural inventions of Rome that have strengthened the tendency to unbelief; every decline in the spiritual life of any section of the Christian Church has been the occasion

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of the growth of infidelity. As the living tree resists the storm that sweeps to earth the dead tree, whose roots have no firm hold in the soil, so a dead church, having only the form of godliness, will be swept away by gales of heresy and skepticism, which would not move a church, in the hearts of whose members was enshrined a living experience of the saving power of Christ. It is over the degenerate and unscriptural forms of Christianity that the philosophy of doubt and disbelief exerts the greatest power. It was not till after the decline of the spiritual life and fire of the Reformation in England, that the anti-Christian philosophy of Hobbes, Shaftesbury, Bolingbroke, and Hume, so largely inoculated the educated classes with the poison of that infidelity, which afterwards extended its influence to the continent of Europe. Germany affords a striking illustration of the same truth. First came a lifeless formality, quenching the light of a living experience of the power of religion. Rationalistic speculation and Atheistic materialism soon followed.

The intolerant narrowness of many Christians, who severely condemn all who do not accept their opinions and interpretations as indisputable truths, has also repelled many liberal and cultivated persons, from embracing a religion which seemed to them so

productive of bigotry and intolerance. On this point, Prof. Christlieb, in his *Modern Doubt and Christian Belief*, very pertinently says: "When they hear them (Christians) passing ignorant judgment on matters of art and science, or condemning everything as anti-christian that does not wear the color of their particular section, harping always on one string—the sinful impotence of the natural man, or the prophetic announcements of the glory of the latter day, as if these or the like were the whole of Christianity,—it is not to be wondered at that such narrowness of views, in professed Christians, should make Christianity itself an object of dislike or suspicion. The man of general cultivation is led to imagine that he must give up his clearer insight,—the patriot, that he must renounce his political aspirations,—if he would become what these people alone would recognize as an orthodox Christian; and this he is naturally not inclined to do." I do not, of course, mean that these causes justify the unbelief which they strengthen. They are little more than the occasions for the development of the natural aversion to holiness and truth. The moral character of the beings whom these things influence for evil must always be kept in mind, in order rightly to apprehend their power to promote unbelief.

III.

ANTI-THEISTIC EVOLUTION AND MATERIALISM, THE PREVAILING FORM AND STRONGHOLD OF CURRENT INFIDELITY

The forms and phases of opposition to revealed religion are too numerous and changeful to be enumerated in this brief review of a large question. Pantheism, which in the last generation was the most prominent and respectable form of antagonism to the doctrine of a personal God, is now little more than a philosophical speculation, which may possess a degree of attraction for speculative and poetic minds, but can never become the belief of the people. Comtism, like Pantheism, is too largely a system of theories, unproved and unprovable, to take any strong practical grasp on common minds. It must always remain an esoteric doctrine, confined to those who have mastered its fancies; and who possess those features of mental constitution, which may render its assumptions congenial to their taste.

The type of anti-Christian thought, which lies at the foundation of the deepest and widest disbelief of the great truths of natural and revealed religion, in the present day, is the anti-theistic theory which assumes that, by evolution alone, matter is capable of producing all the phenomena of life and thought,

which present themselves in the universe. All other lines, by which the armies of the enemy approach the city of truth, are just now secondary to this. The battle of our day must be fought out on the question, whether the attested revelations of physical science are, or are not, irreconcilable with the basal doctrines and facts of the Christian religion. Even hostile historical and philological criticism of the Bible, and skeptical objections against its teaching, though these are the most direct modes of assault, are now cast in the shade by theories respecting the power of matter, which if not atheistic are certainly anti-theistic; for, to those who accept them, they render a personal Creator merely a name for something that is superfluous and unknowable. Let it be borne in mind, that the term evolution may be used in a sense that is wholly unobjectionable. No one can deny that evolution is one of the methods of nature. The world did not spring at one bound from nothing into its present state of completeness. The majestic oak has been slowly evolved from an acorn. The perfect plant is evolved from the germ or seed. The bird with its beautiful plumage has been developed from the egg. Every intelligent Christian will candidly admit that evolution is one of God's modes of working in the universe. About the fact

of evolution, then, there can be no dispute; as long as its meaning is limited to developments proved to be known facts of nature. It is to the practice of attributing to this mode an unlimited causal force that the Christian theist objects. To evolution, regarded as a mode of the Divine operation, no well-informed man will object. It is against making what is only a mode of operation the supreme creative power, that the Christian feels bound to protest. When, therefore, the question is raised: "Is evolution consistent with Christianity?" the answer must depend upon what is meant by evolution. Whether we affirm, or deny, depends altogether upon whether it is regarded as a mode of Divine action; or as a sufficient cause for the great facts of vegetable and animal life, and even of mind itself. If the term is used in the former sense, we may safely admit that it is in harmony with religious truth. But if it be used in the latter sense, we are forced to deny that such a conception of evolution is reconcilable with the belief in a living, intelligent Creator, who has called into being all the forces of nature; and uses them as instruments for the accomplishment of His own wise purposes. Evolution, in some form or other, is admitted so extensively, that no indiscriminate denunciation of it is either wise or safe.

It is against this materialistic philosophy, which excludes a spiritual Mind and intelligent thought and purpose, as wholly unnecessary to account for the production of the various phenomena of the universe of matter and mind, that I wish in this essay to offer some objections, designed to show that it is not according to truth. This new philosophy assumes that all the wonderful things of nature are the products of forces inherent in matter. It teaches that molecular changes, in the invisibly minute atoms of matter, are the cause of all the phenomena of body and mind known to us. They claim that the highest type of beings known to us has been evolved by natural selection, the survival of the fittest, and tendencies inhering in matter, from some extremely low primordial form of life; which in its turn came from the original proto-plasmic slime. These philosophers also maintain that the doctrine of the Correlation of Forces, rightly understood, implies that as heat is transmuted into motion, so physical force is transmuted into mind force; and is the cause of all mental phenomena. Man, with all his organs of body and faculties of intellect, is merely the product of physical laws, or atomic forces, directed by no thought or intelligence. The course of things in nature is a constant evolution, propelled

by a blind force, which has neither choice nor purpose, but operates in obedience to an unavoidable necessity. As Rev. B. P. Bowne tersely expresses it: "Mind is not the beginning and primal cause of all things; but is the final outcome of nature—the highest point to which the whirling atoms can climb." If the existence of some mysterious power behind all these forces be admitted, it is labelled at once as the "Unknowable;" and is at best an undiscovered something, beyond the reach of human thought or apprehension, about which it is futile to form any conception. The Rev. Dr. Bellows, a Unitarian, says of this philosophy: "It is certain that no spirit older than matter, no intelligence other than human, no will freer than necessity, enters into the causes of things contemplated by the new science. It studies a mindless universe, with the sharpened instincts of brutes who have slowly graduated into men—themselves the most intelligent essences in existence. Consciousness, reason, purpose, will, are results of blind, undesigning, unfeeling forces, inherent in matter. God is an unknown and unknowable being, if He exists; but He is a needless hypothesis, and really only the reflection of man's own god-like thoughts and feelings." No impartial reader of the works of modern English and German materialists

will deny, that this is a fair representation of the views of the leading teachers of this school of thought.

It is significant that the leading spirits of this philosophy complain that they are unjustly charged with being teachers of an atheistic materialism. We freely admit that neither Darwin, Spencer, Huxley, nor Tyndall, has directly taught that there is no God. Men who have been educated in the principles of the Christian religion, would naturally recoil from embracing and avowing bald Atheism. Even the acceptance of theories that would logically involve Atheism as a result, does not quite extinguish the old faith of the heart. We have to wait to see a generation brought up in such materialistic theories, before we can judge of their full practical effect. I do not pronounce these men Atheists; although they promulgate scientific speculations, which leave neither room nor work for God in the universe. I know that they supply the name and place of the Divine Being, by some high sounding phrase that conceals the vacuum their scheme has created. But this Agnosticism which dethrones God, and tells us that the evidence for His existence is not sufficient to warrant belief; and that therefore we are to do nothing that implies His existence, is, to all intents

and purposes, practical Atheism. Such a philosophy involves all the bad consequences of avowed Atheism ; for, if accepted as true, it destroys the foundation of all moral obligation and religious comfort, and makes it right for men to act as if there were no God and no immortal destiny. They may disclaim being Atheists ; but if their Agnosticism be admitted to be true, then there is no evidence of any Supreme Being, about whom we have any reason to feel any concern, or to whom we owe any allegiance or love. When the human heart, burdened with sorrow, crying out for a living personal God and Father, complains : "They have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid Him," these high priests of agnostic negations, like a certain high priest we read of in the Bible, bring forth their atoms of matter and exclaim : "These be thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt !"

The charge of materialism lies fairly against this philosophy. Any just definition of materialism must include these theories. By materialism we understand any system that ascribes all results to material causes ; and ignores or denies spiritual existences and forces. In the historic theology of the Christian Church, man has been regarded as possessing a thinking soul, as well as a material body. Those

who denied this, and held that all human faculties were the result of material organization, have been called materialists. But these scientific expounders of physical fatalism deny both the existence of the Eternal Spirit, and of the human spirit. How then can they find fault with being called materialists? If it is not materialism to maintain there is nothing in nature higher than matter and the products of matter, I ask, what is materialism? Mr. Frederick Harrison, indeed, seems to think that because he recognizes, besides the purely bodily functions, the mental and moral nature of man, he is not a materialist; and on the strength of this notion, ventures to hurl the charge of materialism at Huxley and others. But, if to admit that man is a thinking being, capable of being actuated by moral emotion, is fully sufficient to prove that any one is not a materialist, then there never was a materialist in the world; for certainly there never was a rational being that would deny man's capacity of thought and moral feeling. These materialist writers may not like to be called by names that have become obnoxious; but they have evidently no objection to the things which these names represent.

A few quotations from leading authorities of this Darwinian school of thought, will show that I have

not misrepresented this philosophy, in declaring it to be essentially materialist and anti-theistic. Tyndall says: "What are the core and essence of the Evolution hypothesis? Strip it naked and you will stand face to face with the notion that not alone the more ignoble forms of animalcular and animal life—not alone the noble forms of the horse and the lion—not alone the wonderful and exquisite mechanism of the human body, but the mind itself—emotion, intelligence, and will, were once latent in a fiery cloud. At the present moment, all our philosophy, all our poetry, all our science, all our art—Plato, Shakespeare, Newton, and Raphael, are potential in the fires of the sun." In his Belfast lecture he says: "Abandoning all disguise, the confession I feel bound to make before you is that I prolong the vision backward across the boundary of the experimental evidence, and discover in that matter which we in our ignorance, and notwithstanding our professed reverence for its Creator, have hitherto covered with opprobrium, *the promise and potency of every quality of life.*" Again: "The doctrine of evolution derives man, in his totality, from the interaction of organism and environment through countless ages." Other great lights of this school speak in the same strain.

Huxley, in his lecture on "Protoplasm," claims

to have discovered a semi-fluid substance, which is "the formal basis of all life." He says, that "all vital action is the result of the molecular forces of the protoplasm which displays it. And if so, it must be true in the same sense, and to the same extent, that the thoughts to which I am now giving utterance, and your thoughts regarding them, *are the expression of molecular changes in the matter of life which is the source of our other vital phenomena.*"

Herbert Spencer says: "Those modes of the unknowable, which we call motion, heat, light, chemical affinity, &c., are alike transformable into each other, and into those modes of the unknowable, *which we distinguish as sensation, emotion, thought*; these, in their turns, being directly and indirectly re-transformable into the original shapes." Prof. Youmans says: "This law of force spans all orders of existence, not only governing the motions, *but ruling the actions and relations of men.*" Moleschott says: "Thought is a motion of matter." Buchner says: "The senses are the sources of all truth, and of all error, *and the human mind is the product of the change of matter.*" Carl Vogt boldly says: "Just as the liver secretes bile, so the brain secretes thought." Some evolutionists have carried out their principles more fully to their logical consequences than others;

but it cannot be denied that the direct tendency of the teaching of this whole school of philosophers and scientists is to push out of sight, as superfluous, the idea of a living, intelligent Creator; and to represent all moral and mental operations as being governed by the same unyielding mechanical laws which prevail in the sphere of matter. It needs no arguments to convince all intelligent readers of this essay, that this theory of an all-sufficient evolution cannot be reconciled with the truths of Christianity; nor with the belief in a personal living Creator by whom all things were created. I do not think it wise to rashly pronounce any scientific doctrine a contradiction of religion; but when a theory has no place or work for that Great Being, faith in whom is the foundation of all religion, it would be treachery to hesitate to state fully and squarely that it is against religion.

IV.

OBJECTIONS TO THE ANTI-THEISTIC MATERIALISM OF THE CURRENT THEORIES OF EVOLUTION.

1. *A large part of the foundations, on which the Anti-Theistic Materialism of Evolutionists is built, does not consist of duly attested facts of science, but, on the contrary, is made up of plausible conjectures; and*

when duly established facts of science are brought forward as proof, they very often do not warrant the conclusions which are drawn from them. Darwin frequently describes imaginary beings and events of some remote time, in a way that reminds one of a man who, standing by a river which he wishes to cross and finding no way of getting over, vanquishes the difficulty by imagining himself to be on the other side. Thus he constantly substitutes supposed cases for historic or geologic facts. Those who fancy that by rejecting the Bible account of creation, and adopting Darwin's theory of evolution by heredity, variation, and natural selection, they will be freed from all perplexing difficulties, must be remarkably innocent people. For, as Prof. Goldwin Smith remarks, in a recent article in *Macmillan's Magazine*: "A universe self-made, and without a God, is at least as great a mystery as a universe with a God." Most people would say, "Yes, and a far more bewildering mystery."

Man, it is alleged, has been evolved from some species of ape, and the ape probably from some "very remote ancestor," in the shape of an ascidian tadpole. "There are no facts among the developments of geology, or in the written history of the past, or in the experience of the present, that can be referred

to in proof of the descent of man from an ape-like creature." There have been no signs of the progress of monkeys towards manhood, during the thousands of years that are embraced in the history of the race—a period surely long enough to indicate a tendency, if it existed. There is no evidence of the lower animals reaching any higher grade of intelligence, except where they have been domesticated by man, than they possessed ages ago. There have been found no collecting links between men and apes. As we travel back, we find no evidence, either in history or geology, that the human race descends towards the monkey type. There are no remains of any beings that would serve as a connecting link between man and the monkey. It is not pretended that, even a tendency of inferior animals to develop either mentally, or physically, into men has been shown to exist in any period of time. But it is assumed that if long enough time be given, we may believe, without proof, that such an evolution took place in some remote period.

Among the numerous objections urged against this theory by Theistic writers, are the following, which I present in the most condensed form: The transformation of one species into another, which Darwin supposes, is a thing wholly unknown. The

sterility of hybrids is a bar to such transformations, set up by nature. The chain of lineal descent, which the theory supposes, is nowhere to be found. All attempts to complete such a chain have been utterly lame and defective. The imperfection of the geological record is pleaded by the evolutionist under this head; but if the record is confessedly so imperfect, it is not consistent to object so strongly to the Mosaic account of creation, that it does not fully agree with such a record. Animals do not grow more and more simple as we go back in time; and many animals of high organization have appeared suddenly on the stage. Animals of various types have survived unchanged from the remotest periods, a fact that strongly contradicts the theory of constant evolution in nature.

The physical dissimilarity between man and the higher apes is too great to fit into this theory. The resemblances are slight; the differences radical. But the moral and intellectual powers of man create a vast chasm between human beings and brutes; which makes it an irrational and grotesque dream to suppose that a brute could ever grow, by degrees, into an intelligent moral being, capable of grasping the great thoughts of science, art, and religion. Besides, if this tendency of the lower forms of life

to develop into higher organizations, endowed with mental faculties, were sufficiently powerful and general to account for the existence of Man, with all his faculties and powers, surely that development would be progressing on different lines all around us. There would be, if this were the true theory, many specimens of the partly developed man and of the intermediate branches of the family, thrown off from the main line in the ages of the past, during the period in which the race is supposed to have passed up from apehood to manhood, through the agency of heredity, variation, and natural selection. But no such specimens have been found in the remains of the past; and, as I have already said, no such approach towards manhood is going on in the animal world around us; from which we conclude that the theory itself cannot be true. But, not only are there no waymarks, to indicate that humanity has climbed up an ascending path from the primordial germ to its present starry height of organization and intellect, the new philosophy utterly fails to explain how evolution bridges the chasm between the inorganic and the organic, or the lifeless and the living forms of matter. Inertia, is that property of all bodies, by reason of which they can neither arrest nor originate motion. But, "if inertia is a

property of matter, the power to evolve organization, life, and thought cannot be ; but that inertia is a property of matter is a proposition susceptible of overwhelming proof, from the necessary beliefs of the mind, from common consent, from the agreement of philosophers in all ages, and from all the results of experiment and observation.”—(*Rev. Joseph Cook.*)

2. *Evolution, as interpreted by those who have accepted it as the sufficient cause of all things, implies that matter produced mind, and that all the order, harmony, use, and beauty of creation resulted from “fortuitous variation.”* This is unreasonable, and contrary to the indisputable truth that every effect must have an adequate cause ; for it offers no sufficient cause for the state of things which exists within the sphere of human observation. Those who maintain the modern philosophy are compelled to deny that order, design, and adaptation of means to an end, are evidences of an intelligent mind. It is taken for granted, without proof, that the discoveries of modern science have in some way destroyed the force of the argument from design. “Teleology” is a term of reproach with all the philosophers of materialism. But the discovery of the efficient cause of anything does not preclude the existence of a final cause, as the evolutionists claim. This, Dr.

McCosh has clearly shown. The fact that a given result has been directly caused by a certain force does not prove that the force was not directed by intelligence, for the accomplishment of this result. The argument that order, adaptation, and arrangement imply design, purpose, and plan; and that these imply a designing mind, which has employed these methods and adjustments for the accomplishment of some end,—is just as strong as ever it was, and compels the assent of every rational and unprejudiced thinker. Yet, the new philosophy denies all this. The sun indeed gives light and heat, but it never was intended to do this. The eye sees, but it was not intended for seeing. The ear hears, but it was not intended for hearing. And so of all the organs of the body, and all the machinery of nature; they accomplish many important functions, but they were never designed for these purposes. All this is the result of fortuitous variation, if we accept the teaching of the materialists. I think there is something in every unwarped mind, which instinctively rebels against the idea that this can be true. It is not merely that we find in nature instruments and organs, fitted for some special object. Still more remarkable is the independent adaptation of one thing to another, in cases where there is

neither power nor tendency, in either of these related things, to produce the other. The lungs are adapted to the air, and the air to the lungs. The air is just suited to the organ of hearing. But either the organ, or the medium so beautifully adapted to it, would exist forever without producing the other. Take the eye, and the light, as an example of this wonderful adaptation to each other of two things, wholly unrelated as cause and effect. This organ is exquisitely and artistically constructed, in its shape, its material, its delicate and ingenious parts, and in the optical principles on which it is adjusted to its purpose,—adapted to the mysterious thing which we call light. The eye is in all respects fitted to the medium, and the medium equally adapted to the organ. What produces this wonderful adaptation? The eye could not make the light; nor could the light make the eye. The materialist's theory is, that blind, insensate matter did all this. The theist says this is impossible; that such adaptation implies a designing intelligence, using these forces of matter for the accomplishment of a preconceived purpose. Everything that begins to be must have a cause; and if intelligence can be evinced by any arrangement of matter, then such adjustment and adaptation as we see in the human eye evinces intelligence of the

highest order. If we take a broader range, embracing nature and history, we will find still more convincing proof "that there lives and works a soul in all things, and that soul is God ;" who, though invisible to mortal sight, uses the visible agencies of nature to fulfil His wise and gracious purposes. It is a weak objection, that because we cannot discover God by the telescope of the astronomer, or the microscope of the naturalist, we may conclude that He does not exist. Prof. G. P. Fisher forcibly replies to this objection, by showing that our fellowmen are invisible to our senses, unless we call the body the man. We cannot see the thinking principle in a friend with whom we hold communion. An American poet says :

" We are spirits clad in veils :

Man by man is never seen :

All our deep communing fails

To remove the shadowy screen."—(*Cranch.*)

"Why then," asks Dr. Fisher, "disbelieve in God because you cannot see Him? If through the look, the tone, the gesture, of a man at your side, you can behold, with the eye of faith, the invisible mind that resides within, the seat of the thought and affection, why refuse to recognize the Supreme Intelligence, of whom it is true, as an Apostle has said, that "the invisible things of Him from the creation of the

world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead." It is strange, that any rational being should believe, that the manifest adaptation, order, and purpose of the world comport better with the denial of any exercise of thought and will in the production of all things, than with the supposition of an Allwise and Almighty Creator, who ordered all things according to the counsel of His will. Had the world been a scene of chaos and confusion, where no fixed order reigned, there would be some plausible force in atheistic theories respecting the genesis of the universe. But "that those who labor to render the universe *intelligible* should call in question its *relation to intelligence*, is one of those curious inconsistencies to which the ablest specialists are often the most liable, when meditating in foreign fields. If it takes Mind to construe the world, how can the negation of Mind suffice to constitute it?"—(*Dr. James Martineau.*) A recent able writer in the *London Quarterly Review* pertinently says: "It may remain for Natural Science to adjust, and even elevate our popular conceptions of the Divine, by enlarging our ideas of the infinite greatness of Him we adore; but it can never silence the voice in our hearts which cries to the Infinite One as 'our

Father.'” The discoveries of modern science have not destroyed the force and truth of Cowper’s words :

“ The Lord of all, Himself through all diffused,
Sustains and is the life of all that lives :
Nature is but a name for an effect,
Whose cause is God.”

3. *The modern theory of the convertibility of all forces, which constitutes a part of the scheme of materialistic evolution, by assuming that mental and moral operations and results take place according to the same law of necessity which controls the forces of matter, thereby denies to men the freedom of choice which is the basis of all personal moral responsibility, and without which praise and blame cannot be awarded to human actions.* All the operations of the forces of matter take place necessarily, according to a fixed order. The stone will of necessity fall to the earth. The snow will certainly melt at a particular heat. Two gases, having a chemical affinity for each other, will unite to form a compound. And all the changes that take place in matter occur according to an established order, that the substance in which this force operates has no power to resist. But the operations of mind are not under this law of physical necessity ; but are under the law of intelligent free

choice. When we pass from matter to mind, we enter a new kingdom which is under the law of thought and motive, of which mere matter is incapable. Not only are the volitions of the mind unforced, we have the power of alternate choice. The thing that has not been chosen might have been chosen. The man who is blamed for doing some wrong act had it in his power not to have done that act. The man who is praised for some good deed might have chosen not to do that deed. If we deny this freedom of choice, we must also deny human responsibility. Praise and blame, rewards and punishments, cannot be applied to deeds which the agent or doer could not have refrained from doing.

But the theories of modern materialism ignore the radical distinction between mind and matter, and directly imply that all human beings are under this law of physical fatalism. If thought, emotion, and volition are the products of physical forces, operating under the law of physical necessity, just as when a certain result is produced by a chemical experiment, we are inevitably landed in the conclusion, that each human action is the result of molecular changes in the matter of the brain, or of the body, over which having had no control, he has no

responsibility for the resultant act. Such a theory binds all human character and deeds in a chain of physical necessity, that leaves no place for praise or blame, no more than might be given to a clock, because its hands point out the hours of the day. I am saved the trouble of proving, by facts and arguments, that this is the logical result of the premises laid down by evolutionists, as Prof. Tyndall frankly confessed and defended this physical fatalism, which destroys responsibility, in his Birmingham address, in 1877. The bad characters and crimes of men were spoken of by him as misfortunes, rather than culpable, punishable faults. He argued that we should not recoil from this notion of necessity; admitted the force of the plea of the robber, the ravisher, or the murderer, who says, "I act because I must act, what right have you to hold me responsible for my deeds? You punish me for what I cannot help;" and maintained that the criminal is to be punished, simply as a wild beast that injures society, and whose punishment may deter others, and not as a free responsible being.

In reply to this, it is enough to say that the laws, the literature, and the prevailing convictions of the civilized world, as well as the personal consciousness of each individual, amply prove that men are

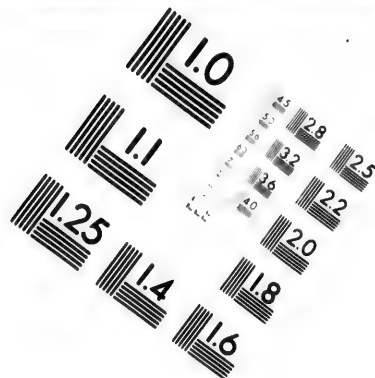
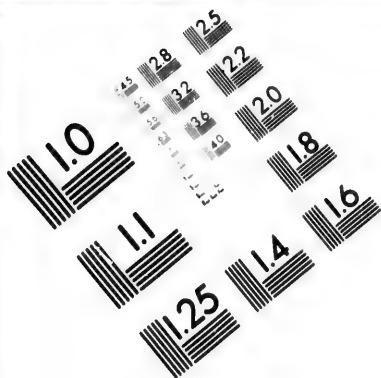
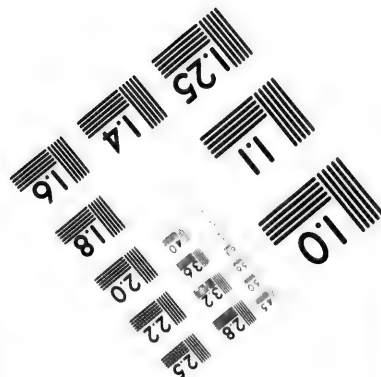
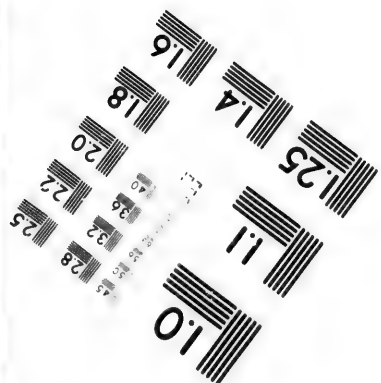
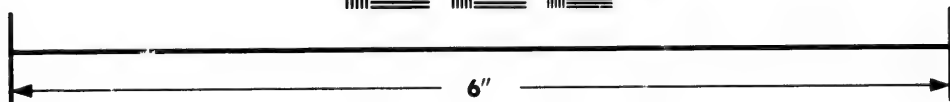
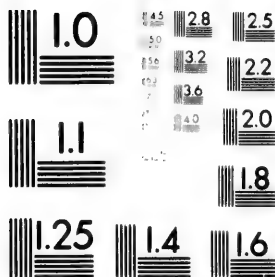


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free beings—not absolutely free from all influences prompting to any acts, but so free as to be able to make choice of either of several alternatives. The theory, therefore, which inevitably leads to a false conclusion, must itself be false. And, whether false or true, it would certainly be demoralizing to all who believed that they were not accountable for their deeds. Such a belief would naturally lead to a recklessness in conduct, that would promote laxity and crime. Dr. Tyndall, indeed, quotes Bishop Butler as teaching that, as far as human conduct is concerned, the two theories of free-will and necessity come to the same in the end. But this is not fair to Butler. This great thinker maintains that fatalism, such as Tyndall pleads for, is so evidently false, so contrary to common sense, and to the deliberation, choice, and preference which are matters of common experience, that even those who profess to believe it must act as if they believed in free-will. But, unquestionably, the fact that this theory of necessity cannot be acted out in practical life, without disastrous consequences; and that it is so evidently contrary to human consciousness that even those, who may have been led by some kind of sophistical reasoning to accept it as true, are compelled to act as if it were false, is not, by any means, a point in

favour of Dr. Tyndall and the advocates of physical fatalism. Men act as free beings, because this theory of physical necessity is *not* true. If it were true, they would not act as free agents; for their consciousness would testify to their bondage, and their acts would be in accordance with their consciousness. For a believer in fatalism to act as a free man, may prove that the doctrine is impracticable, and the man inconsistent; but it cannot prove the truth or moral excellence of his theory.

4. *A belief in the modern Agnosticism, which denies that we can know anything of God, as effectually destroys the foundation of morality and religion as avowed atheism.* The will of God is the supreme law of life; because He who made us best knows how we can fulfil the purpose of our being. And we may feel assured that our wise and loving Father requires nothing of us, but what will lift us nearer to Himself. There is no other safe and authoritative rule of conduct by which to act. The natural propensities and passions of human nature, as we find it, are certainly not a safe rule of life. This might have been the case, if all the tendencies of our nature were in harmony with the Divine will. But those novelists, who constantly make war upon the restraints which law and custom impose upon

the natural propensities, as if feeling and impulse might always be followed as safe guides, forget that unholy and selfish passions have seized the helm of the soul, and are steering it on towards destruction. The darkest deeds in the calendar of crime have been perpetrated under the impulse of hate, anger, lust, covetousness, and other feelings natural to men. "There is a way that seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof is the ways of death."

John Stuart Mill and other modern philosophers, maintain that religion, or a belief in God, is not necessary to uphold morality among civilized men. Mr. Mill thinks that, however we may have obtained our views of morality, they cannot now be lost, without a return to barbarism. He says: "It is reasonable to think that any system of social duty which mankind might adopt, even though divorced from religion, would have the same advantage of being inculcated from childhood, and would have it hereafter much more perfectly than any doctrine has it at present, society being far more disposed than formerly to take pains for the moral tuition of those numerous classes, whose education it has hitherto left very much to chance." In other words, he thinks if the principles of morality were taught by parents to their children, and sanctioned by public

approval, this would be as effectual as the sanctions of religion. But he strangely forgets that a religious conviction of the supreme authority and truth of what is to be taught, is necessary to inspire the parent to teach any code of morals, as well as to give weight to the lesson. It is evident that if the existence of a personal God, and the truth of an immortal destiny be denied ; and utility or personal happiness made the governing law of conduct, the main motives to teach morality, as well as to choose the right, would be taken away. What high court of moral chancery would decide whether honesty or dishonesty, purity or licentiousness, truth or falsehood, was most conducive to happiness ? It is because Christians believe that certain laws of life are according to the will of God, that they have an obligation for their consciences. If in any country there was no legislature authorized to make laws, and no courts of justice to enforce them, there could be no rule of law in such a country ; for every man's judgment would be a law unto himself. So, if the existence of the Divine Lawgiver be denied, I cannot see whence men will receive rules of life, having such authority for the conscience as shall control the selfish impulses of their unholy nature. If there be no lawgiver, there can be no law. Mr. Matthew

Arnold, indeed, speaks of something which he calls, "That, not ourselves, which makes for righteousness." But, as Mr. Martineau says: "Nothing ever 'makes for righteousness,' but One who is righteous."

Comtism and some other forms of modern negative philosophy, go still further; and teach that not only morality, but religion and piety, may flourish without a belief in God, or in a life beyond the grave; which seems to us like saying, that a building can still stand erect, after the pillars on which it rests have been taken away. There is nothing worthy of being called by the sacred name of religion, that would survive the denial of the being of God and the truth of a future life. Why are words of Christian signification so deceptively retained, after they have been robbed of their natural meaning? What is religion? Religion is the faith in God that lifts the soul above the bewildering entanglements of earth. It is the love that expels low and selfish affections from the soul which was made for God. It is the sense of obligation, arising out of the brotherhood of man and the Fatherhood of God. It is the immortal hope, that brings the light of heaven down into the darkness and sorrow of earth. But faith cannot survive without some Being worthy of human confidence and trust. Love can-

not exist, if there be no one in the universe, except an unknowable something, to whom the supreme affection of the heart is due. The sense of brotherhood towards man, and the sense of obligation towards God, are both crushed out of the heart, if the relations out of which they arise are denied. Hope would expire in gloomy despair, if no belief in an immortal destiny inspired and sustained the soul. The voice of prayer and praise would be forever silenced, if the human mind accepted the gloomy thought that there is no loving Father, or that He has not revealed Himself to his intelligent creatures. And the lawless impulses and passions of a depraved nature would become the highest law of life to those who have no fear of God before their eyes, and no standard of right, higher than their own selfish gratification.

5. This philosophy of physical fatalism, not only denies the freedom which is the ground of human responsibility, and the great truths on which moral obligation rests,—*it ignores the great spiritual and religious facts of human history and experience.* Man is not a mere physical or intellectual machine. He has a moral and spiritual nature by which, as well as by the material world, God reveals Himself. If the agencies and forces of physical nature reveal

Divine intelligence and wisdom, the human conscience and the religious faculties of man's nature reveal, with equal clearness, the moral nature of the Creator. Attested facts, relating to the moral and religious history of individuals and communities, the influence of ideas, or the development of character, are as really science as facts that relate to properties and forces of matter; and the conclusions which are fairly deduced from such facts and tendencies in human experience may, at least, be as true and as important to us, as those based on facts of chemical affinity, geology, or natural history. Questions respecting religious truth, or man's spiritual nature, should be solved by an examination of the attested truths relating to those subjects, rather than by speculative deductions from imperfectly understood facts of physical science. Anything that has for a long period of time entrenched itself in the language, literature, and best thinkings of any large proportion of civilized humanity, must have some underlying truth and harmony with the constitution of human nature, to account for this wide-spread and enduring influence. False and artificial theories, like the seed that had no depth of earth, will in time wither and decay.

The history of the influence, upon individuals

and communities, of the religious truths which the Bible reveals and enforces, is one of those great facts, for which materialism has no place; but which imperatively demands recognition in any philosophy that deals with the character, conduct, and destiny of human beings. It cannot be controverted, that the teaching of this Book has been the mightiest force in the civilization and moral progress of the world. Its uncompromising condemnation of the most cherished sins and follies of men, has arrayed against it the bitter antagonism of all those whose wrong-doing it branded with Divine disapproval. Its adherents and defenders were often persecuted even unto death. Hostile critics have expended much learning, plausible and subtle arguments, and keen arrows of ridicule, in labored efforts to discredit and disprove its claims as a Divine Revelation. All along the centuries, the battle against it has never ceased. Yet, in the face of all this ceaseless opposition, Christianity has steadily extended its empire and won new victories, till it has become the one great controlling moral force of the world. In many lands, its teachings have transformed tribes of degraded savages into peaceful and intelligent Christian communities. Just in proportion as its teaching has been known and followed, in any country, has that country risen in the scale of civilization and social progress. The countries where the principles of the Christian Scriptures are most sacredly honored and observed are the foremost countries in the world, in political freedom, intelligence, literature, education, morality, science and art. On the contrary, the countries where the Bible is unknown or rejected are the dark places of ignorance, superstition, and moral degradation. This cannot be a merely accidental coin-

cidence. The facts mentioned clearly sustain to each other the relation of cause and effect.

The testimony of individuals, to the power and adaptation of the truths of the Holy Scriptures to their spiritual nature, should be taken into account, as one of the factors in the solution of the great religious problems of life. The Christian religion appeals to men to try it and prove it. Tens of thousands of competent witnesses have accepted the challenge, and tested the truth of the promises of Scripture; and have testified to the faithfulness of God. If the result of an experiment in chemistry proves the correctness of a scientific theory, why may not well-attested results in mental science equally ratify the truths they illustrate. By believing the great truths of the Gospel, and yielding the heart and life in obedience to their requirements, in countless cases, sinful and wicked men, the slaves of selfish passions, have been transformed; and have become living examples of unselfish benevolence and purity. One such case, in which God vindicates the promises of His holy Word, outweighs a volume of materialistic speculation. I can merely suggest this objection to materialism; but have not space to illustrate and enforce it. We are certainly warranted in concluding, that a theory, or a system of philosophy, which neither recognizes, nor makes any provision for, the highest and noblest faculties and capacities of our nature, is neither in harmony with the great facts of being, nor the eternal principles of truth.

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